



The St John
Ambulance Australia
Historical Society



Proceedings for 2001–2002

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Included with this edition of the *Proceedings*: application forms for membership renewal and new membership

The Society's Proceedings

An introduction to the 2nd edition

Welcome to the second edition of *The Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society*!

The *Proceedings* is the Society's principal publication. This journal 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 papers of historical interest.

This edition of the *Proceedings* contains the Society's annual report for 2001–02 — its first — and the papers delivered to the Society's 2002 history seminar in Sydney. In addition this edition publishes reports on the library and archival holdings of the Australian Office (Priory Headquarters) of St John Ambulance Australia and four of the State branches of St John. As well as this material, two other papers are included: first, a speech made by the author at the launching in June 2002 of *The Zambuks*, the centenary history of the St John Ambulance Brigade—Operations Branch in Australia; and second, the keynote speech delivered at the March 2003 centenary celebrations of the Glebe Division.

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

Distribution of this journal

It is distributed free to financial members of the Society. Non-members and unfinancial members may obtain copies from the Society's secretary, whose address is given at the top of page 1. The price could vary, and will be adjusted to the cost of production and postage in any one year.

Membership renewals and new memberships

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

Renewals 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,

2003–04, and if possible to sign up one new member each. Application forms both for membership renewal and for new members are included with this edition of the *Proceedings*.

First annual report, 2001–2002 of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society

I am pleased to table this the Historical Society's first Annual Report at this its inaugural Annual General Meeting.

Background

The Historical Society came into formal existence exactly one year ago on 21 June 2001, when the Australian Executive of St John Ambulance Australia approved our draft constitution. The draft constitution had been endorsed two days earlier, on 19th June, at the annual meeting of the former Priory History Group, the informal body which served as the foundation from which the Society has grown.

The background to these events lies in the 1997 decision by the then Council of St John Ambulance Australia that the previous Priory Library Committee should be closed on the recommendation of the Priory Structure Review Committee as part of the Priory restructure of 1997–98. The Priory Library Committee, which I chaired as Priory Librarian, then held its last meeting during the Priory Conference in Melbourne in June 1998. The Library Committee had been in existence for 58 years, since the formation in 1941 of the Order's Commandery of the Commonwealth of Australia (Exclusive of Western Australia), which in 1946 was upgraded to become the Priory of Australia.

The Priory History Group

These changes placed me in an ambiguous situation. As Priory Librarian I remained a Priory Officer but was not a member of the Australian Executive Committee, which had replaced the former Priory Council. I remained responsible for the Priory's heritage collection, but had no committee to assist me. Because heritage issues continue to be important to the Order in Australia, even though there was now no Library Committee to maintain oversight, I decided to convene the Priory History Group. After consulting the Assistant Priory Librarian, Dr Ian Howie-Willis, I arranged the first meeting of this Group to take place in Perth during the Priory conference in June 1999.

That meeting, which about 40 people attended, was a success, so we decided to continue meeting during subsequent Priory conferences.

The Steering Committee and the draft Constitution

We held two more meetings of the Priory History Group, in Adelaide in 2000 and in Brisbane in 2001, but by then the idea of giving the group permanent formal status had taken hold. The meeting in Adelaide, attended by about 50 people, voted unanimously to establish a historical society, and delegated the task of drafting a constitution to a “constitution drafting and steering committee” consisting of myself as chairman, Dr Howie-Willis as secretary and Ms Beth Dawson, Dr Edith Khangure and Mrs Betty Stirton as members. Over succeeding months the committee drafted a constitution modelled on the constitution of the South Australian St John Historical Society, which had been functioning successfully for 12 years. Australia’s wide spaces and dispersed population necessitated that our meetings take place electronically, by phone, fax and email. The then Priory Secretary, Chris Thorpe, co-operated fully, and helped the committee by having the Priory Solicitor check the draft. The History Group’s third and final meeting, in Brisbane in June last year, was attended by about 70 people. The meeting endorsed the draft constitution unanimously, and agreed that it should be passed on to the Australian Executive Committee (AEC) of St John for approval. With the permission of the Chancellor, Professor Villis Marshall, I attended the AEC meeting on 21 June 2001 and personally presented the constitution to the members, who then approved it. Their vote brought the Historical Society into formal existence.

Our constitution makes it clear that although the Historical Society uses the name and St John Cross emblem of St John Ambulance Australia with the approval of the AEC, we are a separate, autonomous and self-funding organisation. There are nevertheless strong links between the Society and the Priory. Thus:

- the great majority of our members and office holders will be present or former members of St John Ambulance Australia
- our constitution requires that our Patron and President each be “a distinguished member of the Order”
- the constitution gives the Priory the right to appoint its own representative to the Society’s management committee (this

representative currently being the Priory Secretary)

- the constitution requires that our use of the name ‘St John’ is subject to the permission of the Priory.

Our “Purposes and Objects”, as spelt out in our constitution, also strengthen the Priory–Society bond. This 11-point set of functions requires us 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.*

Later in this report I will indicate the progress the management committee has made in addressing these “Purposes and Objects”.

The Society's interim Management Committee

As well as endorsing the draft constitution, the Priory History Group's Brisbane 2001 meeting authorised the five-member constitution drafting and steering committee to continue as the interim management committee of the Historical Society. The final clause of the constitution provides for such an interim arrangement.

The constitution also empowers the management committee to co-opt other members so that all eight States/Territories would be represented. The interim committee therefore began co-opting additional members immediately. The result is a very large committee, but one that effectively represents the broad interests of all States and Territories. The present members are: Jackie Bettington (Qld), John Blackstock (Vic), Alan Bromwich (NT), Peter Burke (Vic), James Byrne (Tas), Richard Caesar-Thwaytes (ACT), Charles Campbell (ACT), Barbara Davis (Vic), Beth Dawson (Qld), Brian Fotheringham (SA), Len Fiori (Priory Headquarters), Reginald Graham (Tas), Alan Hills (SA), Ian Howie-Willis (ACT), Ian Kaye-Eddie (WA), Edith Khangure (WA), John McLaren (ACT), Pat McQuillen (NT), Loredana Napoli (NSW), Harry Oxer (WA), John Pearn (Qld), Fay Reeve (Tas), Raymond Schilling (SA), Betty Stirton (NSW), Michael Tyquin (NSW) and Kevin Young (WA). Office bearers are Dr Fotheringham (President), Dr Howie-Willis (Secretary), Mr Byrne (Treasurer) and Mr McLaren (Membership Secretary, a “co-opted” position). This management committee remains an interim body until this Annual General Meeting elects office bearers and a new committee.

Our Patron

The Historical Society's Patron is was most fortunate in September 2001 when the Chancellor of the Australian Priory, Professor Villis Marshall G.C.St.J., accepted the interim management committee's invitation to become the Society's patron. Few servants of the Order in its 121 years in Australia have given it service as distinguished as Professor Marshall's.

Professor Marshall has always encouraged the committee's endeavours, and his interest in the Society's further development is greatly

appreciated. I thank him for that encouragement and interest, and I thank him for accepting the position of Patron.

The advantages of Historical Society membership

Several months ago the interim committee was obliged to consider what benefits prospective members might expect to gain from their investment of \$5 in a membership subscription. One St John Ambulance worker, who has so far not joined the Society, wrote to the interim secretary to ask what her \$5 would “buy”. This was not an issue the committee had previously considered, all of us simply agreeing that membership was worthwhile in itself and that its benefits were so self-evident no “selling” was necessary. As this is not apparently a view universally held among our potential membership, I would like to dwell briefly on the advantages of membership.

As I see it, there are four main benefits. First, the \$5 subscription entitles members to free receipt of our annual publication, the *Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society*, which contains information of interest to members plus reprints of the Society's seminar papers. The subscriptions go a long way towards meeting the cost of publishing the *Proceedings*. Second, financial members may vote at the Society's annual general meetings and thus help determine the direction the Society will take. Third, membership of the Society is likely to assist members wishing to conduct historical research in the State/Territory and national archival repositories of St John Ambulance Australia because it enhances a member's bona fides as a serious student of St John history. Fourth, and the greatest benefit is that the accumulated membership fees simply make the Society possible. Without the income flowing from membership subscriptions, there could be no Historical Society; with the subscriptions there is a Society committed to fulfilling the 11 objectives of our constitution. Having a Society with even a minimal \$5 membership fee, and only one annual meeting and one annual seminar, is much better than having no Society at all. Further on this point, from comments our committee receives from members and the donations we have received, it is obvious that our members are delighted that, after 61 years of there being a national federal St John organisation, the initiative has at last been taken to form a national St John historical society.

Progress towards fulfilling our objects and purposes

Moving on from the benefits of membership, I now wish to consider the progress the Historical Society has made towards fulfilling its Objects and Purposes during its inaugural year. I will not deal with all 11 of these point by point, but will summarise our main achievements, and also some of our difficulties, under the following series of subheadings.

1. Regular committee newsletters

As with other national organisations of its kind, the Society is hampered by Australia's "tyranny of distance", which prevents both the Society and its management committee from meeting at any time other than during the annual Priory conferences. The interim management committee has endeavoured to overcome this obstacle by keeping in touch with its members through regular two-monthly circulars or newsletters, and also via a range of electronic communications. Our Secretary's file of committee newsletters is available for perusal by anyone present at this meeting who is interested. In mentioning the newsletters I gratefully acknowledge the huge contribution of two of our interim committee members, Loredana Napoli and Betty Stirton, who undertook the thankless task of photocopying them, then enveloping, addressing and mailing them. Without Betty's and Loredana's prompt, reliable efforts there would have been fewer newsletters, the result of which would have been a less cohesive, less effective committee.

The newsletter is such a worthwhile means of communicating that we could well consider sending copies to all Society members. However, that would add appreciably to our expenditure. Producing and distributing a bimonthly newsletter for all 124 of our present members would add at least another \$600 to our costs, not to mention the "wear and tear" on the volunteers who do its work.

2. Publicity

Our main form of publicity has been via the national and State/Territory St John journals, newsletters and other periodical publications. Our interim secretary has produced several "press releases" to advertise the Society's formation and attract new members. The St John National Communications Manager, Tim-Cansfield-Smith, and the various State/Territory chief executive officers have co-operated in giving these announcements generous space in their publications, for which I thank them. Such publicity has ensured a

continuing flow of new members into the Society. Another important form of publicity is word of mouth, so I would encourage all members to tell their friends about the Society. Another important form of publicity will be the bookmark being distributed with all copies of the Operations Branch centenary history. I will refer to this particular project later in my report.

3. Membership and recruitment

Recruiting new members and persuading members to renew their membership have been activities that the interim committee has given priority. A year ago we would have been happy to have had 50 members by the end of our first year. At the time of writing (15th May) we have 124, and 42 members have renewed their membership for 2002–03. For the continued success of the Society, both moral and financial, it is important that all 2001–02 members renew their membership. I therefore encourage you to renew today if you have not already done so. Similarly, if you are not yet a member, please enrol today. At this meeting we have copies of both new membership and membership renewal application forms available.

At this point I wish to thank our co-opted membership secretary, John McLaren of the ACT, for offering to take on this job in October last year. By doing so he greatly eased the burden of duty for our interim secretary. He and the secretary have developed an efficient routine for processing membership applications and renewals and for maintaining the membership roll. The membership roll, a database in Excel spreadsheet format, is kept up to date by our highly efficient membership secretary.

4. Historical seminars

The former Priory History Group conducted three historical seminars in successive years. The first had only one paper for delivery and discussion, the second two and the third four. All were highly successful, and succeeded in generating the interest that provided the momentum for establishing the Society. This year's seminar, which will take place following the conclusion of the business of this meeting, is the first under the Society's formal auspices. This time six first-rate papers are on the program. Interest in the seminars has clearly grown, and the seminars will clearly remain one of the Society's major endeavours. Will we ever get to the point, I wonder, where we will need a whole day, rather than just a morning session of the Priory conference, to hear all the papers on offer? The interim

committee is dedicated to making the seminars *the* highlight of Priory conference week — the one event that everyone will wish to attend — and so perhaps we might eventually need more than just one conference session.

5. Annual journal: *The Proceedings*

In March this year the Society issued its first publication, *The Proceedings of the St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society 2001–2002*. The *Proceedings* will appear annually, and at this stage will be our main publication. It will be distributed to all financial members of the Society “free”, that is as one of the benefits of their membership. As the chosen title suggests, the *Proceedings* comprise a diary-type account of the Society’s activities over the course of a year rather than a magazine or journal of the formal academic kind. It has its own official “serial number” or “ISSN” (international standard serials number), which is ISSN 1445–7490, and a copy must be lodged with the Australian National Library, which is the official repository for all books, newspapers, journals and other publications published in Australia. The editor for our *Proceedings 2001–2002* was our interim secretary, so I thank him for his efforts to produce and distribute it, which amounted to a week’s full time work for him.

I hope members were pleased with the *Proceedings 2001–2002*, which, among other items, included reprints of the four seminar papers delivered to last year’s Priory History Group seminar in Brisbane. It was a modest production but a useful exercise in demonstrating that we can produce an annual publication. Now that we have proved that this is possible, we will endeavour to ensure that future editions of the *Proceedings* are more up-market.

6. Priory Library, heritage collection and archives

The interim secretary is currently liaising with the Priory headquarters staff over the cataloguing of the Priory library collection. One of our committee members, Dr Edith Khangure, a professional librarian who is librarian-archivist to St John Ambulance Australia (WA) will be or adviser for this project, while two Operations Branch members from New South Wales, also professional librarians, have also offered to assist.

7. Prizes for a Cadet “Knowledge of the Order” project

To encourage the St John Ambulance Cadets to take a greater interest in the history of the Order and its Foundations and

Establishments, the Society’s interim Committee entered negotiations with the Acting Chief Officer (Cadets) over offering a prize to the Cadet who completes the best history project for the “Knowledge of the Order” Cadet proficiency badge. The A/CO(C), Andrea Williams, welcomed the idea, and referred it to the national meeting of her State/Territory Officers (Cadets). At the time the syllabus of “Knowledge of the Order” proficiency badge was under review by the St John Ambulance Australia National Youth Officer, who sought the views of the Priory Historian (one and the same person as our interim Secretary) on what the syllabus should contain to give it a greater emphasis on Australian St John history. (The previous syllabus made little reference to St John history in Australia, despite there now being two national and six State/Territory histories either published or in production.) The Priory Historian also offered to write a short (30–40 pages) history for the Cadets based on the topics in the syllabus when these had been agreed on. The “ball” is currently in the “court” of the Chief Officer (Cadets) and the National Youth Officer, and we await its return. Meanwhile your interim committee remains dedicated to fostering Cadet interest in St John history.

8. Assistance from the Priory Headquarters

I gratefully acknowledge the advice and support that both I and the Interim Secretary have received from Priory headquarters in Canberra, and in particular from the Priory Secretaries, Chris Thorpe and Len Fiori, each of whom in turn have represented the Priory on our interim committee. In addition to these two officers, Ms Therese Reilly, the National Manager for Finance and Personnel, has provided valuable financial advice and has audited our accounts. (I will return to Ms Reilly’s role as auditor later in this report.) I have already acknowledged above our gratitude to our Patron, Professor Marshall, the Priory Chancellor. Further assistance from Priory headquarters that must be acknowledged has been with some of our photocopying and with the production of the bookmark that accompanies all copies of the Operations Branch centenary history book (another matter I will mention again later in this report).

9. Assistance from interim office bearers and committee members

I also acknowledge with gratitude the assistance and encouragement I have received from the interim committee. In this context I

make special mention of the dedicated voluntary service to the Society provided by Ian Howie-Willis as secretary, James Byrne as treasurer, John McLaren as membership secretary and Loredana Napoli and Betty Stirton as facilitators of the committee newsletters and organisers-in-chief of this annual general meeting.

10. “ABN” and “DRG” status with the Australian Tax Office

After protracted negotiation with the Australian Tax Office (ATO) by the interim Secretary, in January this year the Historical Society was assigned an “Australian Business Number” (ABN). The purpose of having an ABN was to achieve “Deductible Gift Recipient” (DRG) status under the new taxation legislation, which would in turn help the Society attract donations. Our application for DRG status was lodged with the ATO by registered letter at the end of January, but so far the ATO has not yet recognised the Society a DRG. The wheels of the ATO, it seems, turn slowly; meanwhile, our interim Secretary’s negotiations continue in that quarter.

11. CPS Credit Union account

As soon as the Society began receiving money from membership subscriptions and donations, the interim Secretary opened an account with the CPS Credit Union in Canberra. This is of the “Business Account” type, but as we are a non-profit organisation it does not attract the fees and charges that would apply to a commercial business account. The present signatories to the account are myself and Dr Howie-Willis.

12. Financial situation

As the Treasurer’s report will indicate, the Society is in a sound financial position, with a balance of over \$1200 in its CPS Credit Union account after meeting its expenses. This amount gives the Society some flexibility in deciding on which of its projects deserve priority.

Despite our sound financial position, at this stage we remain entirely dependent on membership subscriptions and donations to pay our way. For that reason I urge all current members to renew their membership for 2002–03, and encourage all attending this annual general meeting and the history seminar afterwards who are not yet members to join the Society.

13. Donations

As the Treasurer’s report will also indicate, the Historical Society has been the recipient of generous donations. Indeed, donations have amounted to just under half (47%) of our income over the past year. I wish to acknowledge the generosity of two of our donors in particular — first, Cheryl Langdon-Orr, who helped open our account with a very generous gift; second, Kevin Young, one of our interim committee members, who has given us three separate, substantial and extremely generous donations; and third, another of our interim committee members, Edith Khangure, who has also been very generous. I trust that our performance against our Purposes and Objectives in the coming years will justify and repay such confidence!

14. Operations Branch centenary history project

Individual members of our interim committee played a prominent role in both the research and writing—editorial phases of the Operations Branch centenary history, *The Zambuks*, which was launched two days ago by the former Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Tim Fischer. The author, of course, was our interim Secretary, Ian Howie-Willis; but other committee members played a prominent role. Thus five of our number, Jack Blackstock, Alan Bromwich, Richard Caesar-Thwaytes, Beth Dawson and Betty Stirton, all served as State/Territory liaison officers for the project, and as such were the author’s primary contacts in their States/Territories as he undertook his research.. In addition four of our committee members were members of the nine-member review panel that undertook the critical role of reviewing the author’s manuscript and recommending editorial changes. These members were Chris Thorpe, Len Fiori, Brian Fotheringham and Betty Stirton.

15. Liaison with other St John Historical Societies

The Society maintains informal contact with the history groups/societies that have formed in some States/Territories, mainly through particular of our interim committee members who are prominent in these bodies. We have also made contact with the UK St John Historical Society, and recently sent it a copy of our Proceedings 2001–2002. In addition, our Patron and the Priory Secretary presented a copy of *The Zambuks* to Pamela

Willis, the Librarian–Archivist at St John’s Gate and a prominent member of the UK St John Historical Society, when they were in London in April for the annual meeting of the Order’s international Grand Council.

16. Difficulties with the constitution

In practice our constitution has given rise to some unforeseen difficulties. One that has become obvious through recent correspondence with an organisation that wishes to become a member of the Historical Society is that the constitution has no category for institutional membership. Another is that applicants for membership often experience difficulty in finding nominators and seconders before submitting their applications. So far we have got round the latter problem mainly by the Secretary and Membership Secretary retrospectively acting as nominator and seconder after receiving the applications. This is not really a satisfactory solution, and the difficulty remains unresolved. It is possible that we may need to amend the constitution slightly to take account of such problems; however, the process for making amendments is advisedly both lengthy and difficult.

17. Our logo

Over the past year the interim committee has experimented with logos. At first we used the standard St John cross badge of the Order — 8-point Maltese cross with Queen’s Beasts at the intersection — but then took to using the new “red or black bar + roundel” logo of St John Ambulance Australia. This was at the request of the SJAA National Communications Manager, Tim Cansfield-Smith (who is also one of our members). Even though the Society is not formally a segment of SJAA, he was anxious to protect and promote the Order’s brand integrity. Under the guidelines for using the new logo, we are permitted to add our own name and “heraldic device” at the foot of the logo. To give the logo an unmistakably Australian orientation, our interim secretary has been using a boomerang for the latter, a photographic image of a boomerang that his daughter (a specialist in Aboriginal palaeo-anthropology) acquired in her travels. As yet, however, the matter of our logo remains open to further discussion.

18 Bookmark to accompany *The Zambuks*

As most of the Society’s members will be aware, the St John Ambulance Brigade and Operations Branch centenary history, *The Zambuks*, was launched two days ago during the New South Wales St John Council reception for this year’s Priory conference.

They will also know that the compiler of this book was our interim secretary. Members might not, however, be aware that the free bookmark handed out with every copy of *The Zambuks* has been a promotional effort by this Society. The person responsible for designing and producing the bookmark was one of our interim committee members, Ms Loredana Napoli of New South Wales. The bookmark, which bears the Society’s name on both sides, is a very handsome and fitting accompaniment to the book as well as excellent publicity for the Society. I take this opportunity of thanking Ms Napoli for her initiative in developing the bookmark project, securing the necessary grant for its production from Priory headquarters, and in seeing it through the production process.

19. Photographic displays

Three photographic displays are running in conjunctions with this year’s Priory conference. All three have been arranged by two of our committee members from New South Wales — Ms Loredana Napoli and Mrs Betty Stirton. The first display was the one in the Commonwealth Bank, Martin Place, for the reception and centenary book launch on 19th June; the second is the main one here in the Marriott Hotel; and the third one is for the historical quizz (and by the way I hope you all enter the quizz!) that Ms Napoli and Mrs Stirton are conducting. I commend these stalwarts of the Society for their diligence, determination, perseverance and inexhaustible energy in assembling these three displays. The materials for the displays came from all States and Territories, and it has taken Loredana and Betty most of this year to assemble them. I thank them for such productive effort.

20. Certificate of Appreciation

At my request, our interim secretary presented a “Certificate of Appreciation” to Ms Therese Reilly, who voluntarily acted as our auditor. In addition, Ms Reilly has provided us with helpful advice on the establishment of our credit union account, the maintenance of our financial records, obtaining an Australian Business Number and seeking Deductible Gift Recipient status with the Australian Taxation Office. I am sure members will agree with me that Ms’ Reilly’s certificate of appreciation has been well earned.

Concluding comments

From the above resumé of our achievements and difficulties, members of the Historical Society will rightly infer that the interim committee has had a busy inaugural

year. It has been a productive year in which the Society has proved it can operate effectively under the guidance of a committee that cannot meet regularly or often, except electronically and by post. If our first year is an accurate guide of our years ahead, the Historical Society will become a body that will prove useful in the wider life of St John Ambulance Australia. It is important that we do, for the St John heritage in Australia is long, rich and diverse. Our Society is dedicated to preserving it, and to helping all St John members appreciate its value.

That concludes the Historical Society's first annual report, ladies and gentlemen. I have much pleasure in moving that this meeting receive it.

*Brian Fotheringham, K.St.J.
Interim President
St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society
21 June 2002*

REPORTS FROM AUSTRALIAN OFFICE AND THE STATES

1. The heritage collection of the Australian Office of St John Ambulance Australia: Status Report on the Library, Memorabilia and Archives holdings

Library acquisitions and Memorabilia acquired by the Australian Office continue to be catalogued and secured within the Priory main building. Archival documents are also listed and secured in the Priory annexe building. In August 2000, Ms Jackie Bettington was engaged as a consultant to:

- appraise the current archival holdings
- develop a disposal schedule
- determine in consultation with staff, which current records (electronic and paper) should be retained
- provide advice on records management, and
- provide advice on storage requirements.

The outcomes of this on site consultation and subsequent work, included importing existing documentation into a database, referred to as the St John Ambulance Heritage Collection. A full report of existing items was compiled and a recommended disposal schedule documented in early 2001.

This disposal schedule is an important step as it sets the direction for both the retention of items and a platform for implementing effective future record keeping systems. This

schedule addresses archival, library and museum material and covers:

"... correspondence, files, forms, minutes, medals and insignia, publications, technology dependent records, photographs, uniforms, medical supplies and equipment, trophies, shields and memorabilia."

In addition to the documentation, support materials were provided to assist with future work. Further work has not been undertaken to implement these recommendations at this point in time. However, this must be put in the context of several review processes the Australian Office has been involved with since December 2000. Namely, a review resulting in the *Future of St John Report*, March 2001, and currently a review of the Australian Office, of which the outcomes will not be available until later in 2002.

The Australian Office has not received a significant number of items in recent times other than St John Ambulance Australia publications. Similarly, there has not been any significant requests for access to reference materials or visitors specifically calling in to view memorabilia. All catalogued items are able to be readily located internally but access to individual users is not available unless by special arrangement.

In January 2002, we were privileged recipients of *The Reuter Emerich Roth Memorabilia*. This collection was kindly donated by Roth's grand-daughter, Dauna Currie of Saint Helena, California. General Roth's outstanding work for both the St John Ambulance Association and the Brigade was acknowledged with the award of membership of the Order of St John. He was made a Knight of Grace, becoming one of the first St John Ambulance workers in Australia to achieve that honour. A profile of General Roth follows below. Additionally, descriptions and photographs of these items are being made available for your viewing at the June Conference. In due course the items will be displayed appropriately in the front foyer of the Priory building.

*Jenny Leeson
Manager Corporate Support
Australian Office
St John Ambulance Australia*

Reuter Emerich Roth

Reuter Emerich Roth (1858-1924) was a physician who was prominent in helping establish the New South Wales Centre of the St John Ambulance Association (now called Training Branch) and the New South Wales District of the St John Ambulance Brigade (now called

Operations Branch). He was born in Brighton, England to a Hungarian refugee father and an English mother. He came to Australia in 1883, and set up practice in Sydney.

After the formation of the New South Wales Centre of the Association in 1890, Roth was one of the panel of medical practitioners who regularly lectured the Association's public classes in first aid. At that time a first aid course extended across 12 weeks, with a weekly two-hour lecture and practice session. Lecturers and the members of their classes often formed close bonds during that period, as some items among the Roth Memorabilia attest. Roth seems to have lectured for the Association throughout the 1890s.

When the New South Wales Association Centre decided to form a District of the Brigade in 1901, Roth was chosen to be the Brigade's inaugural Medical Officer in Chief. He was one of the four senior officers appointed to bring the Brigade into being in New South Wales, the others being Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Samuel Parrott (Commissioner), Major John Henry Alexander Lee (Deputy Commissioner) and Captain George Lane Mullins, (Chief Superintendent). The position of Medical Officer in Chief was later named District Surgeon, later still District Medical Officer, and in 2000 State Medical Officer. As well as being Medical Officer in Chief for the Brigade, Roth chaired the Executive Committee of the Association Centre for a number of years.

Roth's outstanding work for both the Association and the Brigade was acknowledged with the award of membership of the Order of St John. He was made a Knight of Grace of the Order, becoming one of the first St John Ambulance workers in Australia to achieve that honour, which was then very rare in this country.

Roth probably owed his appointment as the Brigade's Medical Officer in Chief to both his reputation as an excellent lecturer in first aid and to his career as an army medical officer. Before emigrating to Australia, he had served with voluntary army units in London, where he had become interested in military medicine. In 1894 he was appointed captain in the medical corps of the New South Wales military forces. He went to South Africa with the first New South Wales troops sent to the Boer War in 1899. He spent 18 months there, was mentioned in despatches and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. After returning to Sydney in April 1901 he became the principal army medical officer for New South Wales. He lectured in anatomy, physiology and hygiene in Sydney's teacher training and technical colleges for many years, then in 1909 was appointed medical inspector of the Department of Public Instruction. As well as his St John Ambulance involvements, he was a co-founder of the State branches of the Royal Life Saving Society and the Red Cross. In 1915 he became lieutenant-colonel in charge of the 5th Field Ambulance of the Australian Army Medical Corps at Gallipoli. He later served in France. After being wounded there in the battle of Fromelles, he was invalided back to Australia. (Derived from *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 462-3.)

2. St John Ambulance Archives in New South Wales

During 2001 more than 25 metres of records were received at Archives. This includes Olympic files, class rolls for First Aid and associated classes, working files from all Branches, Annual returns from Operations Branch, minutes from all Company committees, financial records for Company and Branches, photographs, trophies and items from relatives of deceased members.

Glebe Cadet Division has the honour of being the first Cadet Division in Australia and celebrated their 75th Anniversary in 2001. As we all know, Glebe Division will celebrate their 100th Anniversary in March 2003. In *The Zambuks* you will read some of the memories recorded by members of Glebe Division.

This year of 2002 marks the century since most women in Australia won the right to vote and to stand for federal parliament. Under the Commonwealth Public Service Act 1902, women had to resign from the public service when they married. St. John Ambulance didn't come under the umbrella of the Commonwealth Public Service but obviously the Board of St John in NSW agreed with this decision. When researching the history of Miss Annie Greenway who had been the General Secretary of St John Ambulance Association for eleven and a half years, we found that she resigned in January 1902 on the eve of her marriage to Mr Frank Middows. It was then written in the minutes of the Association that only men would be employed as Secretary. Mrs Greenway Middows was obviously not daunted by this decision as she donated trophies for competitions, worked for the Social Committee and became a Commander of the Order of St John in 1938 (only the second woman in NSW to be promoted to Commander).

At Archives we are more progressive than the Commonwealth Public Service was in 1902. During 2001 the St John building housing Archives was painted by two mural artists. This was co-ordinated by Marrickville Council from a grant from the Attorney General's Department, Marrickville Council's Graffiti Solutions Group as well as St John providing the funds to employ two artistic young men. We are pleased with the result. Attached to this report, you will find a photo of the walls at Archives.

At the launch of Ian's book on Wednesday we were pleased to welcome relatives of the men who not only formed the St John Ambulance Association in New South Wales in 1890, (Dr. Reuter Roth, Dr. Thomas Storie Dixson and Dr. George Lane Mullins). Dr. Lane Mullins was appointed Commissioner in 1902 and Dr. Storie Dixson Commissioner in 1922.

Shortly after the National Conference we will be saying farewell to our General Manager John Davies. John was a volunteer on the Executive Committee from 1974 to 1988 until he was invited to become the General Manager. St John in NSW wish him every happiness in the future. Ms Rhonda Bignell will succeed John.

Loredana Napoli and Betty Stirton OAM DStJ
Archivists
St John Ambulance Australia (New South Wales)

3. St John Ambulance Australia (Queensland) History and Heritage Committee

The History and Heritage Committee is pleased to report that its financial situation has benefited from donations for specific purposes and some fund raising. The family of the late Sir William Knox agreed that the donations in lieu of floral tributes be made available to the History and Heritage Committee for its purposes. This donation has been gratefully accepted.

Restoration and preservation of some valuable items has been undertaken now that the committee's financial situation has improved.

The Committee has extended the membership to include some corresponding members. The purpose is to maintain contact with the wider Queensland St John membership to ensure items of historical interest are addressed, retained and suitably preserved.

Following last years History Seminar, in Brisbane, the Committee realised that a policy statement regarding Preservation of Historical Data be developed. Very little progress has been made to date. Perhaps other States have introduced policy statements if so Queensland would appreciate any information.

A small Bookplate is now available to all States. Australian Office approved of the design and the item can be purchased from St John Sales.

For the display for the launch of *The Zambuks* the Committee was pleased to provide some photographs as well as a recent acquisition of a 1906 *Zambuk* advertisement found in a secondhand shop in Toowoomba by an Operations Branch member who donated this 'find' to the library.

During the year a variety of interesting acquisitions have been donated to the Committee, these include St John Ambulance Association texts, St John Ambulance Brigade uniform items, a copy of a certificate issued by the joint Committee of the British Red Cross and St John Ambulance, at the conclusion of the Great War, and St John Ambulance Association First Aid Certificates issued to individuals during the early years of the last century, and two National Emergency Services, New South Wales certificates issued in April 1942 together with a text *First Aid to the Injured* published by the New South Wales National Emergency Services, this text is based on the authorised text book of the St John Ambulance Association.

Each State history committee endeavours to assist the others, it is the pleasure of Queensland's History and Heritage Committee to present to Betty Stirton as the hon. Archivist for New South Wales a copy of the 46th Annual Report for year ended 31st December 1948, of St John Ambulance Brigade, New South Wales District. This item was recently donated by Annette Meakins whose father was James Alexander Lechie Clark a former member of Glebe Division who was killed during World War II in New Guinea on the 21st October 1942.

Beth Dawson AM, DStJ
Librarian and Archivist
St John Ambulance Australia (Queensland)

4. St John Historical Society of South Australia

Members of the St John Historical Society of South Australia usually meet on the second Monday evening of each month. We have been meeting since 1989 and have an average attendance of about 15 members. The main activity in the last year has been to slowly refine our collection, removing items donated in good faith but which have no significant historical value. We meet in the headquarters building of St John in South Australia, a converted former police station and courthouse in suburban Unley. The Historical Society keeps its memorabilia in two of the lock-up cells.

Jean Tonkin does a great job in sorting out and maintaining our collection, and Ray Schilling has brought a degree of order to our many photographs. Arnold Lockyer is our treasurer and keeps a close eye on our finances.

The St John Council in South Australia has kindly arranged for five display cases to be mounted in the headquarters building to illustrate St John history. We appreciate this initiative and will have much pleasure in creating the initial displays in them in the coming weeks.

*Brian Fotheringham AM KStJ
Chairman
St John Historical Society of South Australia*

5. The Archival Resource Centre of the Commandery of St John in Western Australia

General Status

The general status of the archives and museum is satisfactory. Individual aspects of our work are described below and summarise the detailed quarterly reports provided to the executive committee during the year.

Acquisitions

The museum has purchased a small number of items from St John in London. These are to supplement the nona-centennial material, St John first aid training and select memorabilia for other parts of our collections.

Donations

We have been most fortunate 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, New Zealand, Victoria and Canberra.

Loans

The historian for the AMA's centennial book *A power for good*, borrowed books and photographs from our collections. Photographs have also been loaned to Dr Ian Howie-Willis for his current work and also to St John NSW for a display during Priory week. Videos and various publications including cadet packages have been provided to cadet divisions prior to their visiting the museum. A uniform and first aid box are on loan to the Carnarvon sub centre for their golden jubilee year; a stretcher and first aid box were provided to the Church of Latter Day Saints for a special "old time" display; and Archbishop Carnley has a book of cadet prayers which he is revising and updating.

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, the Life Saving Medal of the Order of St John, WA local history and badges.

Cataloguing

Cataloguing the collection on the computer is ongoing and it is expected to take a further 12 months to complete the backlog.

Special Visitors

We have been privileged to have a number of special visitors this year including Professor Villis Marshall, Chancellor; Chris Thorpe, Priory Secretary; and Dr Judy Edwards, MLA and Minister for Heritage and Cultural Affairs.



Commandery Museum of St John Ambulance Western Australia, 2002

Museum Displays

The major theme in the museum in Wellington Street was the International Year of the Volunteer in 2001. This is changing during 2002 to 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 the Ambulance Service Medal; Priory and Commandery ties and pins; and history books on Malta plus a miniature Maltese Galley recently donated to the museum. The ties and pins will be replaced later in 2002 with material commemorating 40 years of the Convention of Ambulance Authorities in Australasia.

Museum Volunteers

Our dedicated volunteers continue with regular Wednesday sessions opening the

museum to the public, special openings and tours for cadet divisions, assisting with reference requests; polishing silver and general clearing. One of our most enthusiastic volunteers - John MacLean left WA - returning home to New Zealand to care for his mother. A farewell lunch for John and all museum volunteers was provided in October 2001.

Restoration

Restoration projects this year have included photographs and a lace tablecloth.

Security

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

Projects in 2002–2003

- Ongoing cataloguing of the archival library and museum collections. - Restoration work as required
- Repairs as required
- Reviewing and updating the policy and guidelines of the archival resource centre
- Supporting the SJAA Historical Society
- A morning tea social function for all museum volunteers
- Meeting any reference requests received
- Museum cleaning as required

Summary

Another busy year with satisfactory progress in our archival areas and clear objectives determined for future development of the collections.

Harry F. Oxe ASM, CStJ

Honorary Librarian–Museum Curator

Commandery of the Order of St John in Western Australia

GLEBE DIVISION CENTENARY

(Division registered 20 March 1903)

Glebe Division of St John Ambulance Australia Operations Branch celebrated the centenary of its foundation with a dinner dance at the Galaxy Room of the Randwick Racecourse, Sydney, on 22 March 2003. The keynote speech on that occasion was delivered by Ian Howie-Willis, the Priory Historian for St John Ambulance Australia. The following is the text of his speaking notes.

Tumbarumba is a small town in the mountains south of Canberra. Years ago, when

the Operations Branch was called the St John Ambulance Brigade, Tumbarumba had a small local division. Sadly, it was struggling financially so the members door-knocked to raise funds. The Superintendent, who'd door-knocked non-stop since early morning, finally reached the last house in the last street. When he rang the doorbell a little old lady came to the door.

‘Good afternoon, madam. I’m from the Tumbarumba division of the St John Ambulance Brigade,’ he introduced himself. ‘We’re raising funds. Could you make a donation?’

‘What did you say?’ she replied.

He repeated himself more loudly:

‘Speak up. I’m a little hard of hearing,’ she said.

Shouting now, he repeated his message.

‘Didn’t hear a word you said!’ she responded.

Realizing he was unlikely to get through to her, he just said ‘Forget it’, turned on his heel and walked back down the path.

‘Make sure you shut the gate!’ she yelled after him.

‘Forget the gate!’ he muttered under his breath.

‘And you can forget the Tumbarumba division of the St John Ambulance Brigade!’ she shouted back.

Well, we might be able to forget the Tumbarumba division, and the 800 others past and present, but the one unforgettable division is Glebe, which I’m here to congratulate.

I’ll begin with the historical background. The NSW Centre of the St John Ambulance Association (or Training Branch) formed in 1890. It was the fourth established of what we now call the State St John branches. Earlier were Victoria, South Australia and Northern Tasmania, and later came Western Australia, Queensland, Southern Tasmania and eventually the Northern Territory and the ACT.

In most States, the central or capital city organisation was called the ‘Head Centre’, to distinguish it from the satellite ‘Sub-Centres’ springing up in the suburbs and country towns. The Glebe sub-centre was among the earlier ones, probably 1894, as local communities established their own St John branches for better access to first aid training. Some sub-

centres went on to become uniformed St John Ambulance Brigade divisions after the NSW Centre sponsored its formation in 1901.

Not all sub-centres wished to be reborn as Brigade divisions, and unfortunately various strong ones quit St John permanently. Some resented the idea of hierarchy implicit in an organisation with a promotional structure and uniforms bearing insignia of rank. Others, especially factory-based ones, disliked the Brigade's quasi-military connections as a medical reserve. Military links implied conscription for armed service, a matter of immediate concern because as the Brigade was being established here Australia was bogged down in a messy overseas war. (Right now I pray that history isn't repeating itself.)

Glebe was one of those that successfully made the transition from sub-centre to Brigade unit. It registered separate men's (or 'Ambulance') and women's (or 'Nursing') divisions on 20 March 1903. The men's is the one that survived, though eventually, in 1982, it admitted women, becoming the present unit whose centenary we celebrate tonight. Unfortunately the women's division had already closed, in 1964.

In 1925 the men's division formed the Glebe Ambulance Cadets, Australia's first juvenile division. Here it was years ahead of the competition because the next cadet divisions were still five years in the future. The women's division was slower, not forming the Glebe Nursing Cadets until July 1931. Again it was the male division that survived, becoming a combined division when it admitted girls in 1981. The separate girls' division had a fitful life of only 13 years: it closed in 1935, reopened in 1949 then closed again in 1960.

The membership of the original divisions tells us much about urban Australia immediately after Federation. Thus, of the original 19 ambulance division members, with one German exception all their surnames were English, Scottish or Welsh but none was Irish. Can we conclude that the Irish stayed away until they were sure it wasn't all a Protestant conspiracy?

The original ambulance division was truly a local unit: 15 members lived in Glebe itself and the other four nearby. They were spread across numerous occupations. Except for two salesmen, two clerks and one who gave his occupation as 'gentleman', they were mostly blue collar workers. That was to be expected, for knowing first aid made good sense among people employed in hazardous industrial workplaces, and so most early Brigade

divisions in most States formed in industrial suburbs.

The distribution of ranks tells us more. The superintendent, William Harris, was a police constable and obviously used to command. The sergeant, Walter McNaughton, was an engineer. The first corporal, William Laird, had eight years' military service; and the second corporal, W.H. Hodges, was a draper — and perhaps useful in obtaining trade discounts. The secretary, Cyril Lord, was a clerk, which would explain why he was secretary. And the treasurer, Alfred Irwin, the chap claiming to be a 'gentleman', would have had independent financial means and could presumably be trusted not to abscond with the money.

We know rather less about the women. From annual returns, we know there were 31 of them, they were better trained than the men because they had nine first aid medallions compared with the men's six, and most lived locally, either in Glebe or Forest Lodge.

What we do know about both divisions is that they were remarkably stable. Over the past century the division has had 893 members. Their average time in the division was 7 years in the first 50 years and 6.2 years in the second — each rather better than the present Australian average of 5 years.

A further sign of the stability is the slow turnover in Superintendents. In its first century the division has had only 10. If we exclude the second Superintendent, John Barnes, who had the job for 30 years, the average is 6½ years each, which is probably ample. Any more and the incumbent is likely to go stale. In healthy organisations no one is appointed for life and leadership positions are rotated regularly. The danger of lifetime tenure is evident in the demise of the Glebe Nursing Division, which in its 61 years had only four Superintendents — an average of 15 years each, far too long for a group keen to attract new blood, without which organisations become inbred, cliquish, inward-looking and rigid.

This last comment doesn't mean I'm against family divisions. Far from it, because for most of its history Glebe has remained dynamic partly because of its family groups, many of whom were inter-related. We can see the family factor at work in the Ladies Auxiliary, which formed to support the ambulance division in 1926 and then survived for 51 years. Events organised by the auxiliary were always family social occasions, and did much to maintain divisional cohesion. Anyone

joining the division came to an organisation that was really one big, extended family within which they could expect to find lifelong friendships, a complete social life and much personal support.

The family orientation was also evident in the effort that went into operating the first aid rooms at various parks and beaches in southern Sydney. Some such duties required an overnight stay, and accordingly became family holidays when the wives and children went along too. Similarly, the division's leading role in Sydney's annual Anzac Day commemoration was family oriented. In between duty at the dawn service and later at the street march they'd enjoy a family breakfast back at divisional HQ. The division had a direct personal stake in Anzac Day because no fewer than 27 of its men served overseas in the Army Medical Corps during World War I. In World War II the number enlisting was an astounding 80, though this was across all armed services.

If you wish to read more about divisional life in earlier decades, I commend to you *The Zambuks*, the Ops. Branch centenary history published in June last year. This worthy tome has a long section on Glebe. It was compiled by Betty Stirton and Loredana Napoli from interviews with seven former members who joined at various times between the 1930s and 80s. There's also an account of the cadet division by its Superintendent, Debbie Walker.

I'll now focus on my personal encounters with the division. My first direct contact was 22½ years ago, when I came to Sydney for a fortnight in St John's NSW archives while compiling the Priory centenary history. One day a youngish chap called Sven Nilsson came to see me. He said he was Superintendent of the oldest Brigade division in Australia, and had been preserving its historical records. Would I like to see them? By the time I'd trawled through his pictorial and documentary treasure trove, I had enough material for a book on Glebe alone.

Sven then arranged for me to accompany the division on duty in the Royal National Park at Audley the next weekend. This time his wife, Debbie, was my host. I have three main memories of the occasion. First, Debbie had a personalised car number plate, NSW reg. no. "DEBBIE", which was the first I'd ever seen. (She tells me it's still "DEBBIE".) Second, the day was so uncomfortably hot I pitied them in their black uniforms, even without their tunics. Third, a strange football match was in progress on a nearby oval. There was plenty of

gesticulation but because the teams weren't shouting the match was proceeding in complete silence — like TV with the volume off. I eventually guessed that the Deaf Institute was on its annual picnic. After that Glebe Division was always a reference point for me — a yardstick against which I could measure all other Divisions and their work.

My next personal contact came 19 years later, in August 1999, when I was researching *The Zambuks*. I should explain that the title for the book, an old Australian nickname for a uniformed first aider, was suggested by John Ward, who grew up in the division. To select the name, we ran a nation-wide competition. John was one of three people who jointly suggested 'The Zambuks'. I was delighted because I'd already decided that was my own preferred title.

When I came back to Sydney for my *Zambuks* research I attended a divisional meeting to outline the project and invite members' participation. Brian Hewlett was ill that night so Aravind Viswanath was in charge. He kindly made me the main agenda item. After explaining the project, I invited those present to tell me their stories afterwards. They were very hospitable. I departed with several gifts but only one story. It is, however, among the best in the whole book. Let me share it with you now. It goes like this:

Jennifer Young suffers from severe glaucoma, which various surgical procedures since childhood have failed to cure. Despite that she's a proficient first aider. She demonstrated this in 1998 during a taxi trip to the Sydney Eye Hospital to undergo another operation. On the way her taxi collided with a small Holden 'Barina' whose driver was a heavily pregnant woman. In the passenger seat, without seatbelt fastened, had been her son, a little boy aged only 3 or 4. Thrown from his seat, he'd been knocked unconscious, as was the mother.

'I'm a qualified St John Ambulance first aider,' Jennifer said to the taxi driver, 'so if anyone is injured I can give them first aid. But you'll have to be my "eyes".'

Fearing he might have killed both mother and child, the taxi driver readily agreed. He led Jennifer to the 'Barina's' occupants then placed Jennifer's hands upon the woman. She was still breathing and had a pulse so Jennifer quickly ensured her airways could remain open, then, turning to the boy, was alarmed to discover that he wasn't breathing and had no pulse.

She began CPR, and to her great relief he revived swiftly. An ambulance and the police arrived just then. The ambulance officers roughly elbowed Jennifer aside, swiftly removed the mother and son from the car, loaded them aboard the ambulance and drove off, all within a minute or two. The police took brief details of the accident, then allowed the taxi to continue on its way to the Eye Hospital, where Jennifer duly underwent her operation. Unfortunately, yet again, it was not a complete success.

And what happened to the mother and child? Did the mother lose her baby? Did the boy suffer brain damage? I don't know and possibly nor does Jennifer. Too eager to write down an exciting story, I forgot to ask. (Post script: Jennifer Young, who attended the dinner, didn't know the answers to the questions.)

Not knowing the answers doesn't really matter, however. Jennifer's is a brilliant little story even without the extra detail. What she did was classic first aid in the great St John tradition. She possibly saved two lives without concern for her own inconvenience. Proficiently making her skills available to relieve suffering in someone's moment of crisis was her chief concern.

I've repeated Jennifer's story to dozens of audiences across Australia, and it never fails to draw forth gasps of admiration for what she accomplished at a time of great personal duress. What's important about such stories, however, is not so much that each one is an entertaining little yarn. Rather, they're important because of all those thousands of others that go with them. Together, all the stories are like a great, colourful and endless tapestry that starts early in the twentieth century then sweeps on, up to the present and into the future. The individual threads in the tapestry are the stories that you first aiders can tell about the lives you've saved, the injuries you've treated, the relief you've given someone in pain, and the comfort you've given the distressed. That's what you do; and someone who wears your uniform has been doing it somewhere in Australia, on or off duty, on each and every day since the original Glebe divisions registered.

Finally, without the dedication of 893 Glebe members past and present there'd be no centenary. More important, without people in your uniform Australia would be a more dangerous place for your fellow citizens. You can be proud of what you've done for them since your divisional ancestors registered 100 years ago. *The Zambuks* celebrates your

achievements and you're its heroes. I hope you'll see it as a monument to your first Australian century. I also hope you'll proudly bequeath it to your grandchildren when you depart for your final parade, in that great divisional hall in the sky.

In conclusion, thank you for greeting me warmly, listening to me attentively and laughing in the right places. It has been a special pleasure for Margaret and me to be among you on this most important occasion.

Ops. Branch Centenary History

The launching of The Zambuks, the centenary history of the St John Ambulance Australia Operations Branch (formerly the Brigade) took place in the foyer of the Commonwealth Bank, Martin Place, Sydney, on 19 June 2002 at the beginning of the 2002 Priory Conference of St John Ambulance Australia. The book was formally launched by the Hon. Tim Fischer, former Deputy Prime Minister and leader of the National Party. In response to Mr Fischer's comments, the author, Ian Howie-Willis, made the following speech.

Thank you, Mr Tim Fischer for your kind words about the author and the book he has produced. I must say I was delighted to learn that you'd accepted the invitation to launch *The Zambuks* because I've long admired you for the public stand you've taken on issues important to ordinary Australians. So thank you for being here to grace this occasion. Thank you, too, John Davies (NSW St John CEO), Sir Lawrence Street (President of the State St John Council), Adam Field (Commonwealth Bank) and Willis Marshall (Chancellor of the Australian Priory of the Order of St John) for your encouraging words and for making this occasion possible.

Speeches by authors whose books are being launched usually consist of a list of thank-yous to people who've helped them. This speech is no exception, but before I get started, let me share with you one story from the book. It was provided by Lesley King, the Deputy Operations Branch Commissioner for the Northern Territory, who also supplied the charming little verse, "St John Volunteers", that appears on the verso side of the title page. Thanks, Cuz, for your contributions and your help. The anecdote I'll now read appears on page 350 of the book under the heading "Divine Protection"; and it goes like this:

The Pope was visiting Darwin. As the St John Ambulance Brigade nursing officer, I'd taken great pains to set up a field hospital at the show-grounds venue to accommodate what we thought would be many, many casualties. We had no fewer than 20 beds and stretchers ready for the expected flood of patients. I felt very proud of the arrangements I'd put in place. My pride took a tumble, however, when our District Superintendent looked at the 20 beds. Thinking, perhaps, that on this occasion the crowd of spectators would be under "Divine Protection", he sighed audibly then exclaimed "Oh ye of little faith!"

In hindsight, and with a gold-sealed guarantee of divine protection, perhaps Lesley could have budgeted for no beds at all on the day the Pope came to town. Perhaps St John could have absented itself altogether just that once. Being absent, however, is not a St John habit. If you read *The Zambuks* you'll soon discover that someone from St John is usually present when first aid skills are required; and indeed St John has been present at all of Australia's great occasions since Federation Day, 1 January 1901. The book that Tim Fischer has just launched celebrates that fact.

And now to the thank-yous. I'll start with the three gentlemen most responsible for this happy gathering — Sir Lawrence Street, Mark Compton and John Davies of the New South Wales St John branch. It's a very nice party you've put on for us, gentlemen! I'm sure I speak for everyone present when I say thanks for your generosity, and thanks for the arrangements you've made for this and all the other Priory conference activities. Thank you, too, Villis Marshall and Len Fiori, respectively the Priory Chancellor and Secretary, the dynamic duo who form the hard cutting edge of the St John national management team, for your part in this week's activities; and thank you in advance, Chief Commissioner Lynne Allen-Brown, for the part you'll play later in these present proceedings.

Next on my list is Chris Thorpe, the former St John Priory Secretary, whose role as my chief project adviser continued for four years, until his departure last December. The next debt is to the project executive officers, successively Barry Price and Len Fiori, who facilitated much of what I did. The project sponsors, the Chief Commissioners Villis Marshall and Lynne Allen-Brown, are also high on the thank-you list. They provided warm encouragement through the project's successive phases.

The Chief Commissioners also helped by appointing two project advisory panels: first, a national project reference group, with Stephen Miller, John Spencer and Barry Price as members; second a panel of State and Territory-based liaison officers — Brian Bartlett, Jack Blackstock, Keith Bradley, Alan Bromwich, Kath Burns, Richard Caesar-Thwaytes, Ray Cooper, Beth Dawson, Monica Green, Vince Little, Terry Jongen, and the incomparable Betty Stirton. I relied heavily on their local knowledge in all my dealings with their States and Territories. Thank you, then, to both panels of project advisers.

During my research trips around the States and Territories I also had the welcome co-operation of the Chief Executive Officers of the local St John Ambulance branches — David Baker, Errol Carey, John Davies, Peter Gill, Sue Hatch, Ian Kaye-Eddie, Ivan Lloyd, Bob Parker and Francie Remfry. Similarly, the Operations Branch State and Territory managers did much to assist, and I now thank Dene Ashfield, Gwyn Balch, Sandra Bout, Marcia Chalmers, Patty Dahlitz, Alan Fry, Peter Gill, Laurie Hodgkinson, Lesley Swallow and Jeffrey Williams for smoothing the way before me.

The next debt is owed to my critics, the nine people who read and commented on my manuscript — Lynne Allen-Brown, Len Fiori, Brian Fotheringham, Stephen Miller, Barry Price, John Spencer, Betty Stirton, Chris Thorpe and Margaret Willis. Collectively they put in as many voluntary hours on the task as some Operations Branch Divisions do in a year.

Another debt is to the Operations Branch officers who welcomed me into their Divisions, Corps and Districts as I travelled Australia conducting my research. There are too many to thank individually now, but they're all acknowledged and thanked at the front of the book.

A further debt is to the keepers of records, who provided archival advice — David Baker, Jack Blackstock, Jackie Bettington, Beth Dawson, Caroline Elder, Monica Green, Edith Khangure, Loredana Napoli, Bob Parker, Lynne Richards, Betty Stirton and Jean Tonkin — so thank you record keepers.

Next are all the wonderful St John people, 272 of them, who made personal contributions to the book. There are too many names to mention now, but they're all listed in an Appendix at the back of the book. One name I

will mention is Ray Schilling's. Ray allowed me to use his short history of the St John involvement in the South Australian ambulance service as the basis for much of my Chapter 3. Thank you contributors, and thank you especially Ray Schilling.

And then there's my immediate family, most of whom can't be here today. The family linchpin, my wife Margaret, is here, however, and also my younger daughter, Katie. The book is dedicated to Margaret, but no written dedication can encompass more than a tiny fraction of what I owe her. I'll mention here that she did try to censor this paragraph, which she read after I'd carelessly left my speech on the kitchen bench one day. I usually accept her advice about what to say, but in this instance I ignored it. I said what Pontius Pilate proclaims to the High Priest in verse 22 of chapter 19 of the Gospel of St John — "What I have written, I have written" — and, because it is now Holy Writ, cannot therefore be unwritten.

I must now acknowledge Mark Christie, Eddie Furnell and John Ward for jointly suggesting the book title. A Zambuk, as you'll learn when you read the book, is a St John Ambulance first aider. 'Zambuk' (one word) is on old Australian colloquial term for a uniformed St John person, derived from 'Zam-Buk' (two words), the name of a liniment that early first aiders carried in their first aid kits. That the book is called *The Zambuks* rather than 'Modern Crusaders', 'The Saints Go Marching On' or some other historically inaccurate name is all down to Mark, Eddie and John. Thanks, lads, for coming up with an imaginative, eminently marketable book title!

One other debt I have to acknowledge is to Loredana Napoli and Betty Stirton — *Les Gals superbe* of St John Archives out in Marrickville. They did much of the hard yakka for this book launch; and they assembled the magnificent historical photographic display you see here today, in addition to the equally magnificent ones at the Marriott Hotel. They also worked as my unpaid part-time research assistants for several years, and no task was ever too large for them. If you buy a copy of the book, you'll see an example of their handiwork in the bookmark Loredana designed. One comes free with every copy of the book you purchase. At this point I will ask Loredana and Betty to step forward. [present gifts] Thank you for your loyalty, encouragement and countless hours of hard work on my behalf! Please show them your appreciation of everything they've done to make the book and this book launch a success.

And finally there are all of you people standing before me. Thank you all for rolling up to help make this a happy milestone in Margaret's and my journey together.

I started with a story from *The Zambuks* so it's appropriate that I now conclude with another. It's by a quiet, unassuming chap called Kevin Young, a lifelong Zambuk, who's here with us today. For me Kevin personally epitomises *all* of the virtues of the St John first aider, and *all* of the ideals of St John Ambulance Australia. His story is on page 290 of the book and it encapsulates the St John style. It goes like this:

One case of which I was very proud involved a 53 year old miner called Ted, who was badly injured in an explosion in the Great Boulder mine [near Kalgoorlie]. He had been boring holes in the rock deep in the mine to take an explosive charge when he drilled into some un-detonated explosive. The end of his three-foot drill then burst into several fragments that hit him like shrapnel. He suffered terrible injuries. His left foot was blown off 4 inches above the ankle; his right leg was shattered and later had to be amputated below the knee; he suffered an enucleated right eye (that is, eyeball torn from socket) and a penetrating wound to his left eye from an embedded foreign object and was left with only 15% eye sight; he suffered puncture wounds to his abdomen, chest and face; he had a flail chest with a collapsed left lung; his right ear was torn off; and when I got to him was in deep shock. I treated all his injuries quickly and strapped him on the stretcher, elevating his feet as high as possible. On arrival at the lift stopping place I put the blanket and pillows on the floor because the lift cage was very small, then tipped Ted upside down, climbed up on top of the cage, tied a rope to the winding cable and stood on top of the cage while we were hauled 409 feet to the surface. When we got there I travelled with Ted in the mine ambulance to the Kalgoorlie Hospital.

Ted survived and 20 years later while I was working at the Royal Perth Hospital he was admitted there for eye surgery. I visited him before he went to theatre. He was so pleased to see me he hugged me and said he'd never forgotten how I'd saved his life. He subsequently regained 75% of his eyesight. With his worker's compensation payout he bought some rental flats in Esperance and was able to live on the income. He died only 18 months ago, more than 30 years after the accident that nearly killed him. At the time of the accident the mine management wanted to nominate me for a Royal Lifesaving Medal but I vigorously declined because I'd only been doing my job.

That's the Zambuk way of doing things. That's the St John spirit. Well done, Kevin!

Well done all you other St John Ambulance first aiders, you the Zambuks who are the heroes of the book. As the book points out, you've unobtrusively been notching up achievements like that somewhere in Australia every day for the past century! Long may your organisation uphold its Zambuk tradition of selfless community service; and long may you the present Zambuk generation honour the ancient practical motto of your Order — *Pro utilitate hominem*: 'for the service of humanity'!

Before quitting the lectern, I have another pleasant duty, which is to hand over to Lynne Allen-Brown, the Chief Commissioner, who will make a presentation to Mark Christie, Eddie Furnell and John Ward, the three joint winners of our "Suggest a book title" competition. As the Chief Commissioner takes the podium, would you step forward please Mark, Eddie and John? Ladies and gentlemen, could you please welcome them? (At this point the Chief Commissioner took the podium and presented copies of *The Zambuks* to the three competition winners.)

HISTORY SEMINAR 2002

The fourth annual history seminar of the Historical Society and its forerunner, the Priory History Group, took place at the Marriott Hotel, Sydney, on 21 June 2002. Six papers were on the program. They follow below in the order in which they were delivered.

St John Medals and the Numismatic Heritage of Pre-Hospital Care

*by John Pearn,
President, St John Ambulance Australia (Queensland)*

One repository of health history is to be found in the medals and badges bestowed on those who serve society. Many organisations, of which St John Ambulance is one of the most senior, have struck medals which form an enduring heritage of service to the sick and injured, particularly that rendered in the context of resuscitation, wound care and ambulance transport.

Numismatics is the science of medals, badges and coins as objects both of bestowed esteem and as utilitarian agents of commerce. The most prestigious medal of service to health, in the English-speaking world, is the Medal of the Order of Merit, bestowed ever on only two Australians – Sir Macfarlane Burnet (in 1958) and on Lord Florey (1965)¹. This is

followed by the Copley Medal of the Royal Society, one of which is awarded at the most each year to the person in the world who has contributed most to science in all its forms. Captain James Cook received it, not for "discovering" Australia or New Zealand, but for his work on the prevention of scurvy². Very few Australians have received it, the most recent being Professor Frank Fenner of John Curtin School of Medical Research in Canberra, who in 1980 chaired the International Committee which declared the world free of smallpox³. These are followed by the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology, one of whom is awarded each year specifically in the fields of medicine and health.

Other medals and badges, more local, are a numismatic record of a more personal history of medicine and health⁴. These latter both embody and form a permanent witness and endeavours of small groups, of societies and of associations. Many of these are transient, and often the medals and badges which their members proudly wore, become the only permanent record of the enthusiasm and altruism of their service and of their achievements.

A particularly important area of medallic heritage is in the medals and medalets which are bestowed by organisations, particularly volunteer and charitable organisations, which operate in the field within the discipline of pre-hospital care.

Some examples of the themes portrayed in these medals are now illustrated, starting with the eight-pointed Cross of St. John, originally the civic and commercial emblem of the Kingdom of Amalfi in Italy.

Figure 1



The Silver Medal of the Golden Jubilee (1947-1997) of the Commandery in Western Australia of the Priory of the Grand Priory of St. John.

Figure 2



The Service Medal of the St. Andrew's Ambulance Association, Scotland. Obverse, portraying the head of Hygieia with the Nightingale Lamp, both surmounting a Greek Cross symbolising care.

Figure 3



The Service Medal of St. Andrew's Ambulance Association, Scotland. Reverse, a Greek Cross surmounted by a Scottish saltire.

Figure 4



The altruistic and charitable spirit of teaching and delivery of service in the field of pre-hospital care captures the spirit of volunteerism which is such a feature of Australian community life. The UN International Year of Volunteers acknowledged such service world-wide in 2001. In that year, the International Year of Volunteers, Australia issued a one-dollar cupro-nickel coin to symbolise the spirit

of such charitable work in the tradition of the Good Samaritan.

Figure 5



The Numismatics of Pre-Hospital Care. The cap-badge, of the Medical Corps of the South African Defence Force. It portrays the Aesculapean staff with its entwined serpent, surrounded by a laureate wreath, the whole surmounted by the Crown of King George VI. Such insignia are proudly worn by medics, both full-time Army and volunteer Militia, who serve in the field delivering resuscitation and pre-hospital care, and by doctors.

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The author: Professor John Pearn has served continuously as a St John member for over 35 years, since 1967, when he enlisted as a Divisional Surgeon in the Brisbane South Division of the St John Ambulance Brigade. He was later promoted to District Surgeon of the Brigade's Queensland District. For three triennia (1990-99) he was the National Director of Training for the Training Branch of St John Ambulance Australia. He is currently a member of the National Standards Committee within the Priory Headquarters or St John national office, and he is the President of the St John Council for Queensland.

John Pearn's career in St John Ambulance Australia parallels his equally distinguished military medical career. As Major General Pearn, in 2001 concluded a three-year term as Surgeon-General of the Australian Defence Force, that is head of medical services for the army, navy and air force. During his term of office the military medical services undertook significant commitments overseas, helping with the relief efforts in Rwanda, Papua New Guinea and East Timor.

*In civilian life John Pearn is the Professor of Paediatrics and Child Health and Deputy Head of the School of Medicine at the University of Queensland, based at the Royal Children's Hospital in Brisbane. John is also a distinguished historian of medicine, botany and the armed services. and the author of more than 20 books. For the St John audience, his best known book is his great 1998 work *First in First Aid*, the history of St John Ambulance in Queensland jointly authored with the late Murdoch Wales. He is equally well known for the 1996 book *The Science of First Aid*, of which he was editor-in-chief. It remains the most ambitious publication project ever undertaken by St John Ambulance Australia.*

St John's Wort

"A troublesome weed" — The *Macquarie Dictionary*

*by Brian Fotheringham
Priory Librarian, St John Ambulance Australia*

What is it?

It is a plant that grows to a height of up to a metre in many parts of the world. It is a native of parts of Britain, Europe, Asia and North Africa and has been introduced elsewhere, notably the USA, Canada and Australia, first arriving here in the 1850s.

Description

It has pleasant gold flowers, each with five petals with tiny black dots along their edges. The leaves are green, and when you hold them up to the light you can see small clear dots on their underside, almost as if the leaves were perforated. These dots are glands that hold oil. For the purposes of this talk, the botanical name of St John's wort is *Hypericum perforatum*, although other species exist. I can't claim to be an expert on the botanical fine print of St John's wort, but our secretary, Ian Howie-Willis has a son, Anthony, who has written a successful PhD thesis on the subject while studying at the Australian National University. You can guess to whom I will refer questions.

Hypericin

In mediaeval English, the word "wort" means a plant, herb or vegetable with medicinal properties. If the buds and flowers of St John's Wort are squeezed they exude a dark red pigment which contains the plant's healing agent, hypericin. More will be said about the action of hypericin shortly.

Link with St John

We in St John Ambulance know that St John's Day, the anniversary of the birth of our Patron Saint, St John the Baptist, is celebrated on 24th June. It is the date close to which our

Priory meetings are always held. It also happens that, in the Northern Hemisphere, St John's wort flowers on or about the 24th June, and this is probably the reason for the plant's name.

Many years ago it was found that if St John's wort flowers were placed in oil and kept in the sun they infused the oil with a dark red colour, known as "St John's blood". The earthly life of St John the Baptist did end in a rather bloody way. St John was the son of elderly parents, Zacharias and Elizabeth. He was the cousin and baptiser of Christ. He criticised King Herod for improper behaviour with Herodias, the wife of the king's brother, Philip. At a birthday celebration for King Herod, Herodias's daughter, Salome, danced for the king and so pleased him he said he would give her anything she wanted. On her mother's prompting, she asked for John the Baptist's head on a plate.

St John insignia

The uniforms of certain members of St John Ambulance display a representation of the plant. The gorget patches worn for example by the Chief Commissioner, and by State Commissioners and Deputy Commissioners bear a representation of St John's wort. It also appears on the peaks of the caps worn by State Commissioners and those with higher ranks.

Many of you may have earned the St John Service medal, and maybe several bars to the medal. You will find St John's wort is engraved on the bars, and on the back of the medal. Cadets who earn the Grand Prior's Badge wear an image of St John's wort on that badge. The now defunct St John Medallion also features St John's Wort.

The good

St John's wort extracts can be found in almost any chemist shop, health food shop or supermarket these days in tablets, capsules and liquid form. It has an established reputation as "cure" for mild depression. It is known by some as "Nature's Prozac". The reason it works is mainly because of the hypericin it contains. Hypericin is thought to inhibit the re-uptake by nerve cells of several brain chemicals including serotonin, norepinephrine and dopamine.

The Medical Journal of Australia issued a special supplement on "Depression and the Community" on 20th May, 2002. It states that a meta-analysis of 27 randomised controlled trials concluded that St John's wort is superior to a placebo and not different from tricyclic antidepressants in the treatment of mild to

moderate depression. However the largest trial so far reported (in the Journal of the American Medical Association 2001) is too recent to have been included in the meta-analysis, and it found no difference between St John's wort and a placebo. While St John's wort seems to work in relieving mild depression, it is of no use in more major depressive states.

It is alleged that St John's wort also helps pre-menstrual stress, panic attacks, anxiety, and a host of other complaints. If applied topically it is said to speed the healing of wounds, bruises and minor burns. I am indebted to Dorelle and Arnold Lockyer of the St John Historical Society in South Australia for the following information, gleaned from the April 2002 edition of that other great medical journal, the Australian Women's Weekly. Certain natural therapists use a technique known as "Ear Candling" in which they make long hollow candles of linen, pure beeswax and herbal extracts including St John's wort, insert them in the patient's ears, one at a time, and then light them. The warm dry smoke is claimed to loosen hardened wax, help those afflicted by chronic ear infections, particularly "glue ear". I mention this only to illustrate how versatile our Patron Saint's floral emblem is said to be.

The bad

At the beginning of this talk, St John's wort was referred to as "A troublesome weed". It has been declared a noxious weed in all states of Australia. The agricultural chemical "Roundup" specifically boasts that it can kill off St John's wort. St John's wort spreads by seed and by the underground creeping of its roots. It aggressively competes with other vegetation for light and nutrients and with time can eliminate almost all other plants from a given area.

Cattle that eat St John's wort can develop pale skin patches sensitive to light and may then loose condition and may die. Humans also can develop photosensitivity after taking St John's wort.

The complications

St John's wort can significantly increase the metabolism of some prescribed drugs, and in doing so reduce their effectiveness. Such drugs include some used in treating HIV Aids, and notably cyclosporin, which is used to help prevent rejection of transplanted tissues or organs. In one series of 45 patients, cyclosporin levels fell by nearly half when the patients took St John's wort. The wort therefore is a serious threat to patients who

have received a transplanted organ, such as a kidney or a heart. Patients for transplant surgery must stop taking St John's wort at least 5 days before surgery.

The wort can induce "serotonin syndrome" or what amounts to a serotonin overload in the brain, causing nausea, slurred speech and muscle spasms.

Another drug whose action is interfered with by St John's wort is warfarin. Warfarin is used to prevent unwanted clot formation in the blood, or, in popular parlance, to thin the blood. The consequences of warfarin not working properly include unwanted clots, possibly causing strokes or cardiac problems. The action of other less well known drugs also can be affected by St John's wort, so the message is tell your doctor if you are taking the wort.

Folklore

Traditionally, flowers of St John's wort were placed under the pillows of persons retiring for the night on St John's Eve. This was to induce the dream that St John would appear and bless the sleeper and ensure that he or she would not die in the following year. This was a significant wish in the days when, for example, plague was rife.

"St John's wort doth charm all witches away if gathered at midnight on the saint's holy day Any devils and witches have no power to harm Those that gather the plant for a charm."

(Mediaeval saying dating back to 1400 AD)

In mediaeval times, a childless wife would try planting St John's wort, and when it flowered, would pick the flowers at midnight while naked. This was in the belief that she would then have a child by the time of the next St John's eve. Conversely perhaps, and also in mediaeval times, the leaves of St John's wort were put in the undergarments of virgins to protect their chastity.

An alternative name for St John's wort in ancient times was "Fuga Daemonum", meaning "scare devil". The former Secretary for the Priory of St John in Australia, Charles Campbell, used to grow a St John's wort plant immediately outside the window of his St John Headquarters office. He had heard, as recorded in a fifteenth century manuscript, that the devil would not come within nine paces of the plant.

I trust that all of you, associated as you are with St John, will be similarly protected.

The author: Brian Fotheringham was born in Adelaide in 1941. He graduated in Medicine from University of Adelaide in 1966. He 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 he was the Medical Superintendent and Director of Medical Services from 1979 to 1986. He retired from the hospital in 2001 and now work as a consultant for the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards.

Brian has had a long and distinguished St John career. He joined the Hindmarsh Transport Division of St John Ambulance as a Probationary Surgeon in 1961. This was during the 44-year period when St John ran South Australia's ambulance transport system. He was then promoted through Brigade ranks to District Commissioner, a position he held for the three years 1987-90. This was a tumultuous period in St John history in South Australia, and Brian had the unenviable task of withdrawing the Operations Branch volunteers from the metropolitan ambulance service. That this proceeded so smoothly in such difficult times says much of Brian's leadership and diplomatic skills.

Brian has many other distinctions. His late father was also a District Commissioner in South Australia. Over the past 100 years they are so far the only father-son duo to have been Commissioners in the same District in Australia. Brian was a member of the National St John Council 1990-98. He has chaired the St John Assembly in South Australia; he has been President of the St John Council for South Australia; he has chaired the St John Historical Society in South Australia since 1988; and he has been the Priory Librarian since 1990. He was the chief instigator of the events leading to the formation of this Historical Society, and he has been its interim chairman for the past two years. Following his election on 21 June 2002, he is now the Society's inaugural president.

Displaying the History of St John Ambulance (New South Wales)

by Loredana Napoli and Betty Stirton,
Archivists, St John Ambulance Australia, NSW

Editor's introductory note: *The following paper explains a display of historical materials that the authors had assembled at the Marriott Hotel, Sydney, for the annual Priory Conference of St John Ambulance Australia in June 2002.*

Our Archive is located in the St John Centre at Marrickville (about 30 minutes drive from The Marriott). We have recently celebrated our tenth anniversary.

The Archive is not a Museum. Archives are non-current records created or collected by St John in the course of its work and stored in acid free containers. Not all records are stored in boxes. We have uniforms hanging on padded coat hangers and stored inside calico covers, trophies stored on shelves and in bubble-wrap as well as minute books separated by acid free folders.

Our objectives are to:

- collect
- document
- manage
- promote the use of the archives of St John for our predecessors and successors.

The displays you have seen at the Commonwealth Bank for the launching of the Operations Branch centenary history, *The Zambuks*, and here at the Marriott Hotel for the Priory Conference give an idea of the scope of the content of the Archives.

First aid texts

1. Texts from the 1880s to 2002: It wasn't until 1969 that a First Aid text was written for Australians and printed in Australia. All texts give different methods of treatments. We can read in great detail about 'when a woman's dress catches fire' No mention of a man in a suit. (See the example on display.)
2. About 1920, students were required to know about bones and arteries of the body. A diagram appeared in the front of all first aid texts.
3. In texts written by Sir James Cantlie, it was always stated in the Syllabus of Instruction that 'mixed classes of men and women are on no account permitted'.

The Syllabus of Instruction gave the sixth lecture for males only.

The sixth lecture for females only. This included poisoning, hand seats, preparation for reception of accident cases, preparation of bed, removing clothes and preparations for surgeon.

4. Home nursing text: Glebe Ambulance Division broke tradition and had 17 men learn Home Nursing in 1907.
5. Hygiene: In 1934 a 'Daily Program of Hygiene for a Family' was produced. Highlights were:

- Bowel movement had to be at 7 a.m. and could be at no other time of day.
- Baths had to be cold — not hot.

Recreation time must have caused some problems when the children were older. (See display.)

First aid kits

Members may think that St John Ambulance invented the first aid kit in a polished wooden case. People living in remote properties in Australia in the early 19th century had to be both a bush doctor and

pharmacist to cope with family illness. In 1870 Mr Sexty of Tamworth, NSW, supplied medicine chests containing items to cope with conditions such as diarrhoea, constipation, toothache, bladder irritation, congestion of the lungs etc.

We thank the Hamilton Rouse Hill Trust Collection and Megan Hicks from the Powerhouse Museum for the photo on display of the 1870 household medicine chest. Fourteen items in the chest included:

- Bertrams toilet vinegar — for perspiration
- Ammonia — for fainting
- Quinine — for fever and malaria
- Oil of Clothes — for toothache
- Blue pills — as laxatives
- Abraham pills — to purify the blood.

St John first aid kits

You will note the wooden first aid kit in the display. The male mannequin is sitting on the kit. This will bring back memories for members who relied on their kit - not only for treating casualties, but also as a seat. (See display.) The kit contained:

- glass bottles and stoppers and a glass medicine glass
- tourniquet with card to record details of time applied
- small basin for washing wounds
- first aid text
- combine dressings and bandages as well as a triangular bandage
- the tweezers etc. were kept securely in place on the lid.

Bandaging

The triangular bandage was invented in 1831 by Mathias Mayor, a surgeon of Lausanne in Switzerland. It was first used by the order of St John in England in 1877 along with the 1st edition of a first aid text book *Aids for cases of injuries or sudden illness* in 1878. Demonstrated here is a first aid class held in Melbourne showing the use of triangular bandages in the 1900s.

Many types of triangular bandages have been produced by a number of companies. They include St John Ambulance, Johnson & Johnson, The Verna Bandage etc. (See display.)

Roller bandage

The 1883 edition of *Aids for Cases of Injuries or Sudden Illness* by Peter Shepherd lists unbleached calico, linen, flannel, cotton,

gauze etc. as materials used in roller bandages.

We also have an illustrated roller bandage displayed. This 2002 calico illustrated bandage using the roller bandage machine features the writer of *The Zambuks*, Ian Howie-Willis. (See display.)

Uniforms

The uniforms assembled for display during the Priory Conference are:

- Ambulance Cadet of the 1920's — uniform of black trousers, white shirt, black scarf fastened with a woggle and Hat. (See display.)
 - *Scarf of black, trimmed in white and a black and white woggle.
 - *Hat — black similar in design to the Boy Scout hat of the era.
- Nursing Cadet of the 1920s — white dress, white veil, black stockings. (See display.)
 - *White veil.
 - *Black stockings.
- Ambulance Member of the early 1900s: Patrol collar, water bottle, leather belt and buckle, leather pouch, hat. (see display)
 - *Patrol collar with St John badges.
 - *Leather belt, leather pouch and waterbottle. *Black trousers with white stripe.
- Nursing Member of the early 1900s — White dress, white apron, stiff white collar, black hat fastened at neck. (see display)
 - *White stiff collar, black hat.
 - *White apron with black ribbon holding safety pins finished with St John cloth badge and pin cushion.
- 1980s: The uniform revolution — males and females wearing the same style of uniform.

Public duties

The following are some of the major public first aid duties performed by St John Ambulance in New South Wales over the past century:

Federation. 1901 the St John Ambulance Association was asked by the Government Health Officer for St John volunteers to perform First Aid duty at the Federation Parade. 160 members of the St John Ambulance Association wore an armband

with the St John logo and manned the route. 10,000 people participated in the parade with some 500,000 watching the parade. (See display.)

World War I: St John members became VAD's (Voluntary Aid Detachment) and performed duties such as farewelling members of the armed forces and providing them with chocolates and cigarettes. They also did the same task in greeting the men when they returned home.

Influenza Epidemic of 1919: When this epidemic swept the world at the end of World War I, St John played a significant role in attending patients in sick bays set up in schools and church halls. They had to provide their own masks and gowns. Men of the Newtown Division attended patients being transported by tram from Newtown to The Coast Hospital at La Perouse.

Opening of Sydney Harbour Bridge: On 19 March 1932 the Sydney Harbour Bridge was officially opened. St John members were on duty for many hours and as the day was very warm they treated a large number of casualties for heat exhaustion.

World War II: Men from Glebe Division who were members of the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VAD's) travelled by train to Brisbane escorting servicemen returning home from overseas. As the men of St John became servicemen more and more outside duties were performed by the women of St John. They still carried their wooden first aid kits.

City to Surf: In Sydney this event attracts many thousands of runners and St John assists a large number of people both during and at the end of the run when it reaches Bondi Beach.

Royal Agricultural Show: Each Easter St John members provide a valuable service for the entire duration of the Show.

Anzac Day: In all States and Territories in Australia St John members render first aid from the Dawn Service to the Marches and then to the late evening activities of two-up.

Sydney Olympics: St John in NSW was delighted with the support it received from the members from all around Australia as well as from overseas. I'm sure you all know of the tremendous work that was done by John Spencer in organising this huge event. John received citations from Sir William Deane, Governor General and the Duke of Gloucester, the Grand Prior. (see display)

Centenary of Federation, 2001: One hundred years on and St John members again attended a Federation parade. This time in uniform and manned the route that was identical with the parade in 1901. (See display.)

The authors: *Without fear of contradiction we can say that Betty Stirton has been actively involved in St John Ambulance for longer than anyone who attends the annual Priory Conferences. One of the few people to have earned the eighth bar to the St John Service Medal, she has now been working as a St John volunteer for 60 years. She is as youthful and active now as when she joined the Bankstown Nursing Cadets in 1942. She looks dangerously like becoming the first centenarian to be still an active St John worker. If so she'll also hold the record for the number of bars on the Service Medal. She'll be due for her 15th in 2031, the year after she turns 100.*

In her exceptionally long St John career Betty has done nearly every job available, from Divisional Superintendent to District Cadet Officer, District Officer (Nursing), Deputy Commissioner — the first woman ever to hold that position in Australia — and State chair of the Community Care Branch. For the past ten years she has been the honorary archivist to St John in New South Wales. That St John in NSW has the best organised and most accessible archives of any State branch directly reflects the St John State Council's vision. Betty's own vision was also exceptionally clear — nothing short of 20:20 — because throughout those ten years her organisational and leadership skills added to her drive and determination to preserve and properly catalogue the St John heritage, have been critical factors in the success of the archives project.

Betty spent her salaried career as a school teacher, and she was a master of her craft in the 40 years she spent in it. She has had three other careers, all in St John Ambulance, first as a Brigade officer, second in helping establish the Community Care Branch, and third as an archivist. To equip herself for this last career, as soon as she had retired from teaching she completed qualifications as an archivist to prepare herself for the task she could see ahead.

Loredana Napoli came to St John straight from school. She was recruited to the St John staff in NSW after Betty Stirton had spoken to a teaching colleague at Canterbury Girls High School who was also a St John volunteer.

"Do you have any bright, competent, ambitious, reliable, high-achieving, agreeable, courteous students who'd like to make St John their career?" was Betty's request.

"I have exactly the right girl for you," the teaching colleague replied. "The student I have in mind is the answer to all your prayers!"

Loredana was the answer, and she has remained with St John ever since. In that time she has trained as a librarian-archivist, and is now the salaried librarian-archivist to St John in NSW. Betty has been her mentor, and the apprentice has learned well from the master. Loredana, too, has formidable organisational skills; and, as the NSW St John Council has discovered, she is not only persistent but persuasive when it comes to

seeking the resources required for preserving and presenting the St John heritage.

"Presenting" is a key concept here because as well as their archival work, Loredana and Betty mount historical displays. They usually do this to commemorate significant St John events. Preparing displays for Operations Branch Divisions celebrating the milestone anniversaries — 50th and 75th, and next year Glebe's 100th — is a duty they often perform.

Their handiwork was on display for the 2002 Priory Conference in Sydney, for which they arranged no fewer than three such displays — one for the book launch of the Operations Branch centenary history, another for the Marriott Hotel, and a third one in connection with the historical quizz they conducting. In addition to the displays, it was their idea to produce the bookmark that goes with the Operations Branch centenary history, and Loredana designed it.

St John Ambulance in Alice Springs A short history

*by Pat McQuillen
Territory Officer, St John Ambulance Australia
Operations Branch, Northern Territory*

The History of St John in Alice Springs which I am compiling at present is starting to read like a cross between 'All Saints' and 'The Bold and the Beautiful'.

It all started in 1975 when I arrived in Darwin just after The Cyclone. "After the cyclone" is a term used in Darwin to signify many changes up there. To me it signified a time when my life when took a turn too, for better or worse I still haven't worked out yet. For that is when I unwittingly and unknowingly joined the St John family. I thought I was signing up for a first aid course and when I realized what I had really signed up for I was too embarrassed to quit.

In Darwin, on the many Sunday morning transport duties I was often crewed with a local who spent her spare time cutting out newspaper articles and putting them, along with photos, into albums. She said she was keeping a record of all that was happening with St John in Darwin.

After a few years in Darwin I was transferred by the Education Department to a school in Alice Springs and continued my association with St John.

St John in Alice Springs only did Public Duties at that time and quite a few of the members had been around for a long, long time. Their approach to duties and that of St. John organisation was very different to what I

had encountered in Darwin so I thought I'd better make a note of this, if for no other reason than to tell my mates back in Darwin.

It was then I realized just how different Alice Springs was to Darwin. We are in the same Territory, but the 1500 kilometres that separate us is more like 15,000 miles.

I noted all that was different, such as hunting the chooks out of the caravan before we set out on a weekend bush duty and the wearing broad brimmed black Akubra hats for duties. This was back in 1978. Also the wearing of quilted lined black parka jackets for night duties when the temperatures dropped well below zero .I don't think Darwin ever did believe us when we explained just why we wanted them as we never did receive permission to wear either the hats or parkas. But we bought them and wore them all the same !!

In 1979 St, John took over the running of the ambulance service in Alice Springs and I was able to go back onto road duties.

That was a memorable day for St John so I made sure I recorded that and there were newspaper articles a plenty for me to cut out.

In the eighties when we were required to do written assignments for the Officer's course, one of the questions was to write a short article on the History of your Division.

As I had about 10 years recorded by then, I decided it was time to find out what had happened before I arrived in Alice Springs.

I went to the local library and looked up the local newspaper on the microfilm, copied some articles and put together a couple of pages, and sent it off. The next week I received a call from the editor of Outback Ambulance, our quarterly magazine in the Northern Territory, asking if I would give permission for my history article to be published in the next issue of the magazine, I said yes and sent up a copy of a 1975 field unit to go with the story.

When I had more time I went back to the library and copied everything I found in the newspapers and put them into folders.

I found out that it was in 1952 that the idea of a St. John presence in Alice Springs was first mooted. The local football team played pretty rough games , of a rather rugged nature, was how it was described in the newspaper. There were many injuries, in one

game 4 players were transported to hospital, and that was just in the first quarter.

It was the captain of one of these teams who suggested at a committee meeting that a St. John man should be at the footy in future. When I asked that captain if he had any more information about making that statement back in 1952 he said he couldn't remember saying it but if it was in the *Centralian Advocate*, it must be true.

According to this local paper, the *Centralian Advocate*, a "revival meeting" was then held. The fact that there had never been a St. John group in town before didn't seem to bother that reporter. A division did start up in March 1954. But, with never any more than about 6 members it just wasn't viable, and by March 1956, it had to be disbanded.

By 1960 there were about 5000 people in Alice Springs, and a group of concerned citizens decided it was time to get St. John started again. And in 1961 the Division started and has been functional ever since.

In 1991, I thought 30 years service was a good time to celebrate so we had a mess dinner during the St John week in October.

As our 40th anniversary drew near we were able to organize a bigger and better bash. We had a District conference, Mess dinner, Meeting of Counsellors, Open day, Church parade, historical display and lots more. By this time I had enough information to write up a booklet about the History of St John In Alice Springs.

After it became known I was compiling the history lots of locals came up with the most interesting bits of the history.

Here is just a little of the story of one Volunteer, Gool Mahomed. He was the last of the Afghan cameleers in the Centre. His father came to Australia from Peshawar, which is near the Khyber Pass between Afghanistan and what is now Pakistan. He was a Moslem and wore the turban most of the time, but I do believe he did take it off to put on his St John Cap.

Gool Mahomed was still a teenager when he used to bring his camel train into Alice Springs loaded with goods for the town from the rail head at Oodnadatta in South Australia.

When the railway came into Alice in 1929, his job and the camels were made

redundant. He then worked around the Centre as a boundary rider and stockman until he joined the Commonwealth Railways where he became a Train Examiner. This is why he did his first aid courses. He was a founding member in 1961. He asked medical people at the hospital for more knowledge than just first aid information and practised many and varied procedures. His daughter had kept his original first aid kit and passed it on to us to keep in our historic collection. As you can see by this list of the contents of his first aid kit, he did more than just your basic First Aid.

Not a Zambuk in sight!!!

When then Division started in 1961 the Director of Health in the Northern Territory made a big thing of presenting the new division with a stretcher, not just any old stretcher, but a PORTABLE one.

The members of the first division were very eager to start in 1961, and while they were waiting for the registration of the division to be ratified from Adelaide, they asked if they could have permission to wear St. John armbands whilst on duty. The reply came from South Australia, a very definite NO. So, in good Alice Springs style, they made their own and wore them!!

When the registration did come through, the men received their very stylish black white and grey uniforms. The women, well they had a working sewing bee as they had to make their own.

A cadet Division started at this time, but as it received hardly any publicity, I think it didn't last very long.

Quite a few of the members from the time of the 1960s told how they converted their utes or station wagons into ambulances to transport patients into town from Public Duties sometimes hundreds of kilometres out bush.

By 1965 funds must have been at rock bottom as the division had to publicly announce that it couldn't attend at the Aileron Rodeo, 120 kilometres north of Alice because of lack of funds. The *Centralian Advocate* announced their plight and organised a whip-around and enough money was raised for petrol and medical supplies and the crew did make it to Aileron in time for the rodeo.

Everyone I interviewed from the 60s to the 70s emphasised how it was the local service clubs that kept St John alive in the Centre during those early years. The Apex

Club donated the first ambulance in 1970 and the Lions Club donated the first caravan in 1977.

In those days the only form of medical communication was with the Royal Flying Doctor and you needed a radio to do that, and radio telephones were few and far apart.

As these duties usually entailed a night or two out bush sleeping in the swag beside the car, the member usually took all the family, including the dog in the car or caravan.

During the sixties every single thing that happened to St John in Alice Springs was recorded in the local newspaper, even a spat between a couple of ladies members over one the male members was recorded. All this has made my job a lot easier. In this way we are once again, a little bit different to other divisions, we have lots of records of information of events of the early days but not much of the new.

After finding all this information it seemed such a pity that I was not able to compile and record it in the proper manner. I discussed it with Alan Bromwich and he suggested I apply for a grant from the St. John Endowment Trust which I did and it was awarded last month.

Now it's full steam ahead because local history is here today but forgotten tomorrow, especially in a transient community such as in a 'Town like Alice'.

The author: Pat McQuillen is a St John Ambulance Operations Branch Territory Officer in the Northern Territory. She was born and grew up at Avoca in central Victoria, where she became a pupil teacher (teaching apprentice) at the local State School before attending Melbourne Teachers College. After graduating, she taught in Victoria for 10 years before heading off overseas. She taught for a couple of years in Canada then worked in Hospitality at Montreal International Airport for 3 years. While living overseas Pat travelled around the world three times, the highlights being Timbucktu, Katmandu, The Cape, The Horn and North to Alaska. In 1975 she arrived in Darwin, where in 1976 she joined the St John Ambulance Brigade, little suspecting that this would become a new career. She became a Divisional Officer in 1980, then Superintendent of the Adult and Cadet Divisions in Alice Springs. She later became a Corps Officer, and when the Corps were done way with became a District then Territory Officer. Pat was also a founding member of the Institute of Ambulance Officers. For many years she held a Driving Instructor's permit and taught driving to both the volunteer and salaried ambulance officers in the Northern Territory.

Away from St John, Pat continues working as a teacher. She has been involved in Aboriginal Education for the past 20 years and is currently teaching Home Economics in Alice Springs at Yirara College, a residential college for teenage Aboriginal Students from out of town.

Always a keen student of history, Pat is the great authority on St John Ambulance history in Central Australia. She has written extensively on this subject and is the author of the history of St John in Alice Springs. In addition she was instrumental in organising the celebrations held late last year in Alice Springs to mark the 40th anniversary of a continuing St John presence there.

'Rise and Fall?'

The St John ambulance service in South Australia — a history

by Raymond G. Schilling C.St.J.
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Introduction

There is no doubt that the operation of the ambulance service was the greatest and most successful undertaking embarked upon by St John in South Australia in its 117 years existence.

How did St John obtain the Ambulance Service?

In 1950 Adelaide had a reasonable number of ambulances, but they were provided by several different operators, and the services weren't co-ordinated, so in the case of accidents you could either have several attending, or none at all. Sickness and accident cases were handled by:

- the Police with two ambulances stationed at Police Headquarters in Victoria Square,
- the South Australian Ambulance Transport with seven ambulances from three suburban stations,
- Northern Suburbs Ambulance Association with one ambulance at Prospect,
- Joe Myren with one at Parkside, and
- Coles & Stevens with one ambulance stationed at Port Adelaide.

In addition,

- the South Australian Government had an ambulance for the transfer of patients between their hospitals,
- the Repatriation Department had one for their patients,
- the South Australian Railways had an ambulance stationed at their Islington workshops, and
- St John had three ambulances for use at sporting functions.

Adelaide newspapers were very critical of the service, and as a result, the State Minister for Health, Sir Lyell McEwin, approached Bill (later Sir Edward) Hayward, Chairman of the recently formed St John Council for South Australia, and asked if St John could co-ordinate the ambulance services of Adelaide and South Australia. Hayward said "Of course we can!" and that night wrote down an eleven point plan on a piece of paper. That agreement, struck in July 1951, remained in place without any legislative backing for the next 33 years.

St John formally took control of the metropolitan service in February 1952.

Building a Statewide service.

Let us consider the elements which made up the St John Ambulance Service.

Organisation

Because the South Australian Ambulance Transport and the Northern Suburbs Ambulance Association both had volunteers at night and weekends, and paid staff on weekdays, the St John Council decided to follow this pattern, brought the volunteers of those two bodies in as a Transport Corps of the St John Ambulance Brigade, and entrusted the running of the metropolitan ambulance service to that Corps for the first few years.

After the metropolitan service had settled in, St John gave some attention to the few services then present in the country, and made arrangements for their representatives to meet together at the new Transport Headquarters. They, and others which commenced in the years that followed, formed the St John Country Ambulance Services Association which contributed much to the decision making processes.

It was agreed at an early conference that ambulance services in the settled areas of country South Australia should be located so as to be within 30 minutes of a call. New services were established conforming with this recommendation. In 1987 there were 92 country stations operating in SA.

An early edict made by St John in relation to country services, was to "let them run their own shows" and generally they did it very successfully. Nevertheless all country service greatly appreciated the help given by St John, and saw wisdom in working toward standardisation which was bought to its ultimate conclusion in 1978 when forty-six of the 55 country services amalgamated with the metropolitan service to form the Statewide Ambulance Service. This brought to an end the

era of them running their own shows, and removed almost all local management.

Headquarters Buildings

Once St John had formally acquired the ambulance service, and had one or two new ambulances ordered and on the way, it became time to replace unsuitable real estate, with Transport Headquarters at Hindmarsh the first on the list.

A Building Appeal was launched in 1954 specifically for that building but unfortunately it didn't reach its target so the new Hindmarsh "Depot" was built with features which would have been better had the appeal been successful.

The State headquarters of the whole St John organisation at that time was in Claridge House, 52 Gawler Place, Adelaide, with a room on the second floor housing the Secretary and his assistant. In 1957, the St John Council bought its first headquarters building at 21 Austin Street. It was a narrow gutted two storey building converted on all floors to suit our needs. The ground floor became a staff car park and for the first couple of years the city's ambulance station during office hours. The first floor was a general office and included a Board room, and the second floor the training department. Although there was plenty of room in the building when we first occupied it, because the ambulance service was going ahead so rapidly, it became necessary on several occasions to also rent additional nearby offices.

In 1979, our Grand Prior, the Duke of Gloucester, officially opened a purpose built headquarters housing both administrative and transport departments at 216 Greenhill Road, Eastwood. Once more although not fully occupied when we moved in, nine years later that building had to be extended.

After the separation, the Ambulance Service took over the Greenhill Road premises and St John moved to a renovated Court House and Police Station complex at Unley.

Centres

There were no impressive ambulance stations or St John meeting halls when St John took over the service so it was decided to have a series of Building Campaigns to raise money for St John Centres, which would include areas for divisional training, first aid classes, storage, and in almost all cases an ambulance garage. These campaigns ran four yearly from 1962 to 1974 and were particularly successful enabling

Centres to be built at almost every place St John had a division.

In latter years, the voluntary crewed country units of the State-wide Ambulance Service were feeding their surplus finances into a central Capital Reserve Fund which was used, among other things, to assist in financing the construction and additions to Centres.

Management of each completed Centre was in the hands of a local committee.

Air Ambulance

South Australia's St John air ambulance service commenced as a part of the Whyalla ambulance service in 1965. The St John Council Chairman, Sir Edward Hayward, initially disagreed with St John becoming involved with aircraft, but the Whyalla people cleverly got him 'on side' by naming the first air ambulance after him! The service grew to operate three air ambulances flying throughout South Australia and beyond, but ended in 1995 when it was taken over by the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Communications

In 1952 before two way radio, when an ambulance crew had completed its case, they would phone headquarters to advise the operator. If there was no follow on case, the crew would be told to "return to depot". Once the phone had been hung up, the crew could not be contacted, meaning on their way back they could pass within metres of a calamity without knowing it.

Basic two way radio was installed in the metropolitan fleet in 1955 with the country following. Systems were installed in country towns on the same frequency as the metropolitan area and were controlled locally until the ambulance service's regional headquarters took over.

Training

When St John took over the ambulance service, training was to senior first aid standard, with all personnel, both paid staff and volunteers, receiving their training at Brigade divisional meetings. As ambulance equipment became more sophisticated, so did the training in its use, but no manual had yet been produced on the necessary subjects.

In 1960, five fourth year medical students became Probationary Surgeons in the Brigade's Transport Corps in exchange for the Ambulance Service giving them some casual employment over the Christmas vacations. Three years later they assisted by writing

chapters for our Ambulance Transport Nursing Manual. Two of those five young men are still very much involved with St John: one, Glynn Davies, is our current State Council Chairman, and the other Robert Black, our District Surgeon.

I should add that Brian Fotheringham, the Chairman of our Historical Society, and Willis Marshall, our Chancellor, also began their St John careers as Probationary Surgeons in South Australia, but a year or two after the group I have just mentioned.

At about the same time the Ambulance Transport Nursing Manual was being written, selected metropolitan paid staff and volunteers were receiving tuition in methods of instruction. It was relatively easy for those men to pass on their knowledge and ability to metropolitan ambulance officers, but to instil the training into the whole of the country areas was more difficult. It was accomplished in two ways. Firstly, country zone and service instructors were brought to Adelaide for a weekend of 'How to Instruct', and revision in pertinent subjects, and secondly, a group of 10 of the better metropolitan instructors went to each country zone in rotation to teach practical subjects to as many ambulance officers as the zone could muster. All were outstanding successes and did much to raise the level of proficiency of country ambulance officers and create a bond of friendship between all parties.

The State Ambulance Training Centre commenced in 1975 at the Hindmarsh Transport HQ, and expanded in all aspects in keeping with the changes taking place in the service during the next twentyodd years, including separate training for the paid staff.

Equipment

The medical equipment carried by the Police ambulance in 1951, was 6 triangular bandages in a cardboard box. Joe Myren's ambulance had a vase for flowers in the back! Each ambulance of the SAAT and NSAA carried a basic first aid kit and a set of wooden splints. Resuscitation at that time was by the Holger-Neilson or Schafer method so no equipment was necessary for that purpose.

As years went by more and more equipment was being carried on the ambulances of the St John fleet to enable crews to treat all sorts of emergencies, including child birth, respiratory failure, pain relief, rescue, fracture management, intravenous therapy, poisoning, etc.

Then there were the aids such as sphygmomanometers and electrocardiographs

to help the ambulance officer, and later 'paramedics', carry out their diagnosis and treatment.

Even the stretcher and its bearing went through several periods of improvement. Stretchers merely sat on the floor of the ambulance St John obtained in the 1950s from their previous owners, but after having the rear doors fly open and, a stretcher with a dead body on it, shoot out the back of an ambulance outside Parliament House after a jerky start, clips were hastily fitted to stop that ever happening again.

In the late 1970s the entire ambulance fleet was outfitted with American Ferno-Washington stretchers enabling the crew to wheel the patient right up to the ambulance's back doors and load without further lifting.

Vehicles

The ambulance vehicles St John inherited were a motley lot, the most common being two-berth Internationals. Shortly after taking over, we produced a couple more 'trucks', and then several single berth ambulances on Ford V8 car chassis. Later models had automatic transmission and heaters! Airconditioning wasn't an option in those days.

A few years later again, the Holden station sedan and later the panel van were bought, converted and became our basic ambulance. They were very small but in those days little equipment was carried. In an emergency these ambulances were also expected to carry two stretcher patients with the attendant leaning over the back of the front seat to render assistance. Their advantages were low purchase, conversion and running costs, and high resale value to a car hungry public.

The SA St John designed Holden EmCare ambulance was possible when GMH produced a vehicle with a chassis. This was, as far as SA was concerned, a revolutionary ambulance into which the patient was loaded feet first and hip height, and in which the attendant, or attendants if necessary, could stand and work around the head of the patient whilst the ambulance was mobile. The cost of the vehicle and some of the laws regarding safety eventually stopped its production.

Public Relations

Success breeds success and the excellent publicity that St John received in the 60s and 70s caused more and more people to know about and want to help our organisation.

The four yearly building campaigns and official opening of St John Centres throughout the State was continually before the public's eyes. Local communities were encouraged to use their St John Centre which invariably occupied a prominent position.

First aid classes, public duties and cadet activities were always before the public.

Service clubs were eager to be associated with the St John Ambulance. Lions and Rotary were involved in funding the EmCare ambulances. Lions assisted in an 'Accident Action' first aid campaign, and Apex worked with St John on many occasions.

Senior doctors and St John worked together on many projects including pioneering patient and neonate retrievals.

St John featured in road safety messages from the SA Police and the Road Safety Council.

We were one of the organisations contacted for advice when two major interstate highways, namely the Eyre Highway (to Western Australia) and the Stuart Highway (to the Northern Territory) were being realigned and sealed.

We were invited to have representation on the committees planning the new remote towns of Roxby Downs and Maria.

St John was one of only about half a dozen groups to have a representative on the South Australian Government's Health Commission Advisory Committee.

And rarely a day passed without St John being featured in a good light in at least one SA newspaper — at least until the industrial problems commenced.

Personnel

"You know, the paid staff are only filling in for the volunteers.." was said to me in jest by a volunteer in the late 1960s, but he was right. The ambulance service, as it was then constructed, only needed paid staff where and when volunteers couldn't be obtained, and that was between 6.00 a.m. and 7.00 p.m. on weekdays, and for a few hours on Saturday mornings.

For the first sixteen years, the St John ambulance service management had virtually no say in the selection of ambulance volunteers; that was left to the Superintendents of the respective Transport Divisions.

When more paid staff were wanted, and that wasn't very often, an advertisement would be distributed to Divisions through the internal mail. Applicants knew the work before applying and the employment officer generally knew the applicant, which made for a very stable permanent staff.

This was the era when paid staff were expected to be members of the St John Ambulance Brigade and attend Divisional meetings and obligatory parades the same as the volunteer. Almost all did, but it didn't sit too well with some of the staff even in the 1950s.

Some of the paid staff held rank in the Brigade although they may not necessarily have had any authority during the paid staff hours, so the use of the Brigade uniform with its rank markings created some confusion, especially when a Brigade sergeant or officer worked at a station where the station officer was a private in the Brigade. The first attempt to relieve this anomaly was to issue the permanent staff with a shoulder flash with the word 'Brigade' removed, and indicate the paid staff rank as bars on the epaulettes.

In 1982 the most obvious change from tradition took place with the introduction of blue uniforms for the paid staff.

Unions

When St John took over the ambulance service, the dozen or so paid staff were members of the Transport Workers' Union. Ten years later they transferred *en masse* to form the ambulance section of the Australian Government Workers' Association (AGWA) because they felt they had more in common with hospital porters and other Government workers than truck drivers. In 1978 the road staff members of the AGWA formed their own union, the Ambulance Employees Association (AEA), and made it quite clear that their ultimate goal was the removal of St John volunteers as ambulance officers, and St John as the ambulance operator.

The 'industrial' pot was to be continually stirred for the next decade with the AEA regularly introducing bans and attracting bad publicity to St John.

The Volunteers 'Union'

In 1977, believing that the volunteer ambulance officer was getting a raw deal, a volunteers' action group was formed. Its executive, consisting of less than a dozen of the 550 ambulance volunteers in the

metropolitan area, described themselves as the protectors of the voluntary principle and accused the unionists of trying to wreck the State ambulance system. They thumbed their noses at the authority of successive Brigade Commissioners, made whatever inflammatory statements against management or Unions they thought would publicise their cause, and attacked the Council for giving in to the unionists' demands. One of their number was a TV journalist which gave them easy and frequent publicity.

Finance

The ambulance service received its income from three major sources, subscriptions, fees paid by non-subscribers, and State government grants. Because of the number of volunteers in the organisation, the cost of wages was minimal, and that benefit was passed on to the users as very low fees compared with other states, and what the SA Ambulance Service was forced to charge after the removal of metropolitan volunteers.

The New Era.

The move into the Eastwood headquarters and arrival of a new General Manager in 1978 should have been the start of a wonderful new era but unfortunately it wasn't all good. The GM had new and bigger ideas for St John and its ambulance service and the new union was out to make a name for itself.

Industrial relations had only months before necessitated the appointment of an officer to handle that portfolio and in the months to come he would more than earn his salary.

Inquiries

Until now the various Governments had had no problems with the ambulance service, but both sides of parliament were soon to be dragged into the fray. The first of the Government directed inquiries was by Professor Opit, followed very closely by a Parliamentary Select Committee inquiry, even before the Professor had finalised his report. Points resulting from the inquiries included:

- an Act of Parliament to cover the ambulance service,
 - ambulance services to be licenced,
 - public advertising for recruits, and
 - an Ambulance Board to be formed,
- all of which were acted upon sooner or later.

Integration

The new manager wanted to encourage the paid and volunteer officers to associate more and hoped they would work and train together. He wanted to be able to use paid staff or volunteers to supplement each other's weaknesses on the rosters. It was called "integration". The theory was put to the test when two paid crews were assigned to duty in 'voluntary hours', ostensibly to assist the volunteers for the evening duty, with the volunteers assisting the paid staff when and where needed during the early morning hours. The Annual Report of that year tells us that the trial "worked well and will continue"!

In the intervening years, the skills of paid ambulance officers had been increasing and a proposal was put forward that paid 'Advanced Life Support Ambulance crews' integrate with volunteers in the 'voluntary hours'.

A meeting of volunteer Brigade ambulance officers expressed anger at inroads being made into their hours, so when more integrated crews went ahead in 1988, it is not surprising it started the most bitter dispute yet between the ambulance unionists, management and the volunteers.

Picketing

The situation came to a head on 13 March 1989 when management began standing down paid staff who were obeying union directives to maintain a series of work bans. Almost immediately members of the AEA joined by some of their families and supporters began picketing St John House at Eastwood.

Management asked the Brigade Commissioner to call in the necessary voluntary crews to provide Adelaide with a continuing ambulance service for as long as the dispute should last, knowing that the request, made at the express urging of the Minister for Health, could only serve to inflame the dispute. But with no volunteers - no ambulance service. The Commissioner ordered his members to crew the ambulances, which of course escalated the confrontation.

Bad Publicity

The union's tactics had been calculated to embarrass the St John management and draw attention to the unionists' cause, gaining banner headlines in the daily newspapers and featuring on the radio and television news services. Until now the Union hadn't succeeded in forcing the withdrawal of the volunteers, but this time they had their greatest victory to date. Four months later the

Commissioner announced that the volunteers would be removed from metropolitan and larger country stations.

Volunteers valiantly filled in while the service recruited and trained more staff, but the harassment and agitation continued until the last voluntary metropolitan duty in April 1991. St John was once again hitting the headlines.

The Joint Venture

Concerned that the continuing bad publicity would bring the St John reputation further into disrepute, senior Priory officers flew to Adelaide. Priory officials concluded that the St John Council was beyond extricating itself from the industrial relations morass. The resulting deal, the 'Joint Venture', between Priory and the South Australian Government, deliberately excluding the St John Council for South Australia, was for a transitional service, the South Australian St John Ambulance Service, which became effective in 1993.

Separation

In 1995, the Priory withdrew; the name 'St John' was removed from the title, and the South Australian Ambulance Service resulted. After 43 years, St John was no longer in the ambulance transport business in South Australia.

The last remaining links between St John and the South Australian Ambulance Service (SAAS) are where both bodies use the same Centre or ambulance station, and in country South Australia where several Divisions continue to assist their local ambulance service branch.

Division of Property

When the public and government were generously responding to the building appeals conducted by the St John Council for South Australia Inc., the name 'St John Ambulance' meant ambulance transport and almost all 'Centres' built from the funds included an ambulance garage. So when St John and the Ambulance Service separated, decisions had to be made as to who should be the rightful owner. St John in whose name the money was raised and to which organisation the donors gave, or the South Australian Ambulance Service which didn't exist at the time, but was now running the 'service' which most donors associated with the campaign.

St John no longer had the need for the same number of buildings nor the income to

maintain them, so if retained, Centres could become liabilities and not assets.

Each Centre was considered individually and approximately half transferred to the South Australian Ambulance Service.

Was anything gained by St John operating the Ambulance Service?

St John was good for the ambulance service because:

- St John attracted dedicated volunteers many of whom may not have made themselves available if the service had been run by a government or profit-motivated organisation;
- St John had more ambulance officers in South Australia than is even the case now, making it more likely for a trained ambulance officer, as opposed to a first-aider, coming across and assisting at an accident; not to mention the enormous value in a major disaster;
- St John could provide a trilogy of pre-medical skills to complement the ambulance service; i.e. the teaching of first aid, the disciplined and regimented body of trained first-aiders, and skilled ambulance officers;
- the voluntary ethos of St John and input from volunteers enabled the cost of wages to be kept to a minimum, saving the Government, and the public, millions of dollars;
- the Order of St John was a well recognised charity which attracted donations.

And the ambulance service was good for St John because:

- membership of the Brigade rose to unprecedented numbers, from 1043 in 1951 to a peak of 4909 in 1981.
- it gave the Brigade members a higher level of knowledge and skills to aspire to and made the work of the volunteer more interesting;
- it attracted professional people, notably doctors, chemists, lawyers, accountants and other academics who more than likely would not have been attracted to the traditional Brigade first aid duties;
- the instruction given to members of St John first aid classes by practising St John ambulance officers was better because the instructors had probably seen and handled the injuries about which they were teaching;
- finally, ambulance cases were always kept before the eye of the public by the news media, and that invariably meant good

publicity for St John, and consequently a vast fund of public good will.

Epitaph

St John in South Australia began operating the ambulance service in February 1952 and finished its involvement in 1995. For those 43 years, St John ran one of the best services in the world. The means by which St John rose to the respect and esteem are now history, and we have returned to the level we occupied before we took on the ambulance service; a provider of first aid services at public events and a teacher of first aid.

There will always be a St John organisation doing its wonderful charitable work, but in South Australia it seems unlikely to ever return to the prominence it had for those 40 years in the last half of the 20th century.

What a pity!

The author: Ray Schilling is from Adelaide; and his St John membership goes back to the 1940s. He joined the St John Ambulance Brigade as a Cadet in 1944. People who read *The Zambuks* will discover that his main reason for doing so was not to learn first aid but to acquire a uniform. (It was wartime, and nearly everyone else seemed to be in uniform.) Four years later Ray did what comparatively few Cadets have done by transferring to his local adult Division. Six years after that, in 1954, he moved to the Unley Transport Division, where he became a volunteer ambulance officer. From then on he had two St John careers, one as a Brigade volunteer, the other in the ambulance service. He moved steadily up through the Brigade ranks. He transferred to the District Staff in 1965 then rose to Grade II officer status. In 1982 he was appointed as the Brigade's first District Ambulance Officer in South Australia. He retired from the Operations Branch in 1995 after 50 years' efficient service.

Ray Schilling's career in the ambulance service also prospered. After two years on the voluntary staff, he was employed as a salaried ambulance officer in 1956. In the ambulance service he also rose through the ranks to become a senior station officer before being appointed as the South Australian Country Superintendent in 1965. He became the Services Manager in 1987, and in 1991 was appointed as the salaried Manager of Operations Branch for the State. He retired from full time employment in July 1993 after 37 years on the paid staff of the State St John Council.

Ray was what anthropologists would call a "participant observer" during the decade of industrial strife that resulted in the St John Council disengaging from the State ambulance service. He witnessed what was happening from the "inside", both as Brigade member and ambulance officer. In retirement he produced a history of those troubled years, and it was so good that Ian Howie-Willis used much of it in *The Zambuks*. That's what he'll now talk about, his topic being 'The St John ambulance services in South Australia: A short history'. Ladies and gentlemen, please welcome Ray Schilling.

Third Aid (or occupational therapy)

Researching and writing the centenary history of the St John Ops. Branch in Australia, 1997—2002

by Ian Howie-Willis
Priory Historian, St John Ambulance Australia

1. Introduction

Some of you attended the launching of *The Zambuks* by the former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer, on 19 June 2002. Those who did would have heard me speak briefly about the Operations Branch centenary history project. Today I don't intend to revisit the ground I covered then, but instead will explain how I came to be writing yet another book — my fifth — on St John Ambulance in Australia. I'll go on to share with you some of my memorable experiences during the researching, writing and production stages leading to the publication of *The Zambuks*. In doing so I hope to point to some of the pitfalls facing the institutional historian, and also the unexpected pleasures he or she will find along the way.

A book like *The Zambuks* is never the work of one author. Inevitably hundreds of people will play a part in its making. So, too, with this book. Reading out all their names would take up much of the time available for this paper, so I won't now attempt to acknowledge them all. Their names and contributions are duly listed at the beginning of the book in the Acknowledgements on page vii. I do, however, thank them all now, for without their assistance *The Zambuks* would have remained just a good idea.

2. Origin of the idea

I'll start by making clear that *The Zambuks* isn't my attempt to secure an entry in the *Guinness Book of Records* by having written more St John histories than anyone else. Instead it began as a form of occupational therapy — a kind of 'Third Aid' as distinct from the 'First' variety taught and practised by St John Ambulance or the 'Second' kind, which is the province of medical practitioners. It probably began as the germ of an idea on 7 October 1997, the day after I was operated on for cancer of the prostate in the John James Hospital in Canberra. I was sick and sore after my six-hour operation, with drips, tubes and electronic monitoring terminals attached to most parts of my body, and the 20-centimetre scar down my abdomen held together with 21 shiny metal staples; but I was nevertheless elated to discover that I wasn't dead yet. In

thinking my thanks to the Almighty for delivering me safely back to consciousness in the recovery ward, I made one of those bargains of the desperate — 'Spare me and I'll devote the rest of my life to doing whatever it is you want of me! Give me a few more years, and let me know how you want me to spend them.'

God was very kind, for over the succeeding weeks I found myself thinking often about St John Ambulance and its Brigade. I'd come to feel remiss that in the four St John books I'd produced over the previous 18 years, I hadn't said much about the Brigade-Operations Branch. Each of my books had contained their obligatory chapters on the foundation and growth of the organisation, but I'd nowhere written a single coherent account of how the Brigade had been transplanted to, become acclimatised and then reproduced itself vigorously in Australian soil. 'The Brigade will be celebrating its centenary in Australia in four or five years,' I thought as I regained my strength, 'so I could make amends for my previous sin of omission by writing a centenary history.'

The next step was to take my idea to the Priory Secretary for his opinion. This job had changed hands while I'd been in hospital: Charles Campbell had departed after 22 years and his replacement, Chris Thorpe, was now occupying the office. I made an appointment to see Chris on the pretext of introducing myself as one of his Priory officers. 'I'm your Assistant Librarian,' I explained (using my formal title) when we met, 'but I don't catalogue books because my job is to write them; hence my informal title "Priory Historian".' I then said there were two projects I could work upon. First was a history of the St John Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem, which I'd visited several years previously. There was a splendid history waiting to be written about Australia's involvement in the hospital. About 30 Australian eye doctors had been sent there by St John over recent decades. By interviewing them and setting down their experiences I could compile a history of Australia's links with the hospital. Like Charles Campbell before him, Chris wasn't enthusiastic about that one — and I continue to disagree with them here: the Ophthalmic Hospital is a fascinating story crying out to be told — so, second, was the possibility of a centenary history of the Brigade and Operations Branch in Australia. Chris immediately warmed to the idea. 'Write me a submission saying how

you'd do it, and I'll take the matter up with the Priory Executive,' he promised.

Over the next couple of months I researched and then developed a 10-page submission setting out what chapters my proposed Brigade-Ops. Branch would consist of, how I'd research them, how long it would take and how much it would all cost. I presented it to Chris late in January 1998, just before I returned to work after my three months off. He took it to the Chief Commissioner, who was then Villis Marshall, and on to the Priory Executive. About a month later, in early March, he rang me to say the Executive had accepted the submission and that I could begin work on what was now officially called the 'Operations Branch Centenary History Project'. He told me to liaise with Barry Price, the Ops. Branch national secretary. I then met with Barry, who said that to guide the project the Chief Commissioner had appointed a three-member reference group consisting of Stephen Miller representing the Ops. Branch National Headquarters Staff, John Spencer representing the Commissioners; and himself as project executive officer. In addition there would be an advisory panel of State/Territory project liaison officers consisting of Brian Bartlett (South Australia), Keith Bradley (Western Australia), Alan Bromwich (Northern Territory), Richard Caesar-Thwaytes (Australian Capital Territory), Ray Cooper (Tasmania), Monica Green (Victoria, succeeded during 1999 by Jack Blackstock), Vince Little (Queensland, succeeded during 1998 by Beth Dawson) and Betty Stirton (New South Wales). As I was still working full time in my job as a program manager with the ACT Office of Training and Adult Education, not much else got done after that in 1998, most of which was spent establishing contact with the members of the Project Reference Group and the States/Territories Advisory Panel, and then producing and distributing several thousand copies of a publicity flyer announcing the project to rank and file Ops. Branch members.

3. The research phase

The actual research began in January 1999, when I retired from the ACT Public Service. I began by re-reading all the materials I'd used 19 years previously, when I first came to St John Ambulance to research my first St John history, *A Century for Australia* (1983), commissioned to celebrate the centenary of a permanent St John presence in this country. That is, I re-read the annual reports of the Grand Priory of the Order of St John for the 30 years from the mid-1880s, the period when the

Brigade was conceived, born and grew up in the UK; then I went on to re-read all the books in the Priory Library reflecting on the Brigade. By far the most useful was still N. Corbet Fletcher's little gem of 1929, *The St John Ambulance Association: Its History and its Part in the Ambulance Movement*. Less useful was Ronnie Cole Macintosh's 1987 history celebrating the centenary of the foundation of the Brigade in England, *A Century of Service to Mankind: A History of the St John Ambulance Brigade*, which I found disappointing because it made only three general references to the Brigade in Australia. Then I re-read all the Chief Commissioners' annual reports, which are published in the Priory annual reports and extend back six decades to 1941.

Moving on, I began looking through the contents of the 16 filing cabinets and dozens of archives boxes that comprise the Priory archives. These were rather better organised and stored than when I'd last worked on them back in 1980, but I was in for a shock because a very large chunk of the most critical source of all, the minutes of the annual Brigade Standing Committee meetings, had gone missing. Nowadays the Standing Committee minutes go back only to the mid-1970s, whereas in 1980 there was a complete file reaching all the way back to 1941, when the Standing Committee first formed. Somehow a 35-year span of corporate memory had been lost. What had caused this unfortunately long span of institutional amnesia? The answer is I don't really know. The reason might have been an over-hasty spring cleaning, possibly during the transfer of files from the Priory headquarters to its adjacent newly acquired annexe in the mid-1990s. Or perhaps there had been a thoughtless act of vandalism earlier on, in the mid-1980s when the Priory headquarters staff had begun multiplying. Had the imperative of more room for ever more new staff won out over space for archival records, some of which were then discarded to make way for desks and computers?. One must hope that the reason was not a third possibility — a conscious act of historical sabotage by someone who either purloined the minute books for their historical value or — even worse — deliberately destroyed them in hope of 'sanitising' the record by denying to future historians the records that would be of most use.

I'm not paranoid so I don't subscribe to conspiracy theories of this third kind. What I do believe, however, is that whatever happened to them, the vanished Standing Committee

minutes have left a huge gap in the written record of the Brigade and Operations Branch in Australia. Producing the sort of rigorous national institutional history I had hoped to write would now be much more difficult because for this organisation the annual Standing Committee minutes are *the* critical source. With a complete set of Standing Committee minutes you can write a highly detailed chronological institutional history. Without them you can't. You can turn to other sources and other approaches — interviews, news media reports, personal memoirs etc — and still write credible history; but you won't be able to construct the fine-grained year-by-year account of the organisation that would have been possible if all the minute books were still available.

Worse was to follow as I began my two-year program of visiting all the States/Territories for research in March 1999. Archival policy, I soon discovered, varied greatly between the eight jurisdictions. Practice varied along a continuum all the way from New South Wales, which has adopted a highly professional approach to archives management and employs a professional archivist, down to the State which can't tell you who its St John Council chairmen and Brigade Commissioners were up till the early 1970s because it has lost all its annual reports before 1972. I know that that State once had a set of annual reports going back a further 47 years, to 1925, because I had worked on them in 1981. Since then this gap of nearly half a century has opened up in the written record. Over-zealous spring-cleaning again? Laxity with managing the records, perhaps? Letting the annual reports be taken home by someone who forgot to bring them back, for instance? No one can tell, but when I mentioned the matter to the State CEO he huffily pointed out that the only records he was obliged to retain were the financial ones, and then only for seven years. When such attitudes prevail in management, critical records are apt to vanish and, sadly, with them corporate memory.

What does an historian do when he or she discovers such great gaps in the record? The answer is that one turns to whatever other sources might be available to help fill in the blank spaces. Fortunately for the Brigade and Ops. Branch there were many alternative sources. What is lacking in one State's records might well be found in another State's. For instance, in the case of the State that couldn't tell me the names of its pre-1970s Commissioners the archivists in New South Wales had records that helped fill the gap.

Similarly, the missing Standing Committee minute books in Priory headquarters were partially offset by the Chief Commissioners' annual reports, which in turn could be supplemented through interviews with Brigade veterans, material available in State/Territory annual reports and articles in the various State/Territory magazines and newsletters.

The type of source material available exerts a strong influence over the type of history one writes. In the case of *The Zambuks* the source material has led to a hybrid creation. It's part institutional history of the conventional kind, that is based on archival records, and part oral history, that is developed from what I was told by present and former Brigade and Ops. Branch members. I didn't plan the book that way. Instead I thought I'd be writing a fairly conventional institutional history — set out chronologically decade by decade — but one in which the important themes would be illustrated with several dozen personal stories from St John people about the work they did. What I ended up producing was, however the reverse — a book consisting mainly of personal anecdotes contributed by some 270 present and former members, with the hundreds of stories they told me loosely hung on an institutional and thematic framework.

The reason it worked out like this was what happened when I departed the archives at Priory headquarters in Canberra to conduct my research in what were called Operations Branch Districts until a wrong-headed change of nomenclature two years ago. (They're now called 'States and Territories', an imprecise term which, depending on context, can mean a political jurisdiction, the province presided over by a St John Council or the area in which a Commissioner has authority.) When I got out among the Districts and the members' personal anecdotes — the oral history — started flowing in, I soon realised that they were so rich, diverse and pregnant with human interest that these rather than the institutional and archival material would have to be the main focus of the book.

4. Visits to the eight Districts

I began touring the eight Districts in March 1999, and by the time I'd finished two years later in March 2001, I'd spent two to three weeks in each. I began with Tasmania, which I visited in March and again in July 1999. Next was South Australia, where I went in May 1999 and again in June 2000. Western Australia was next, in June 1999. Then came New South Wales in August–September 1999, Victoria in the October and Queensland in the

November. The Northern Territory followed in March 2000, and finally the next November–December the Australian Capital Territory, which I left till last because it's my home turf and I could therefore fit it in at my convenience. The last visit of all was back to Victoria in February and March 2001 to spend some time with the Mount Beauty Division in the upper Kiewa Valley in the State's far north-east. The reason for going there was that my wife and I have a second home nearby at Tawonga, where substantial slabs of *The Zambuks* were written. I could hardly write a book about the Ops. Branch which ignored my local 'home' Division. The same applies to the Namadgi Division, which meets only a few hundred metres from our home in Canberra and which was therefore the first Division I chose to visit in the ACT.

In my two years of visiting Districts I worked in District headquarters archives, conducted interviews, spoke at meetings of District staff, attended State St John Council meetings, went on public duty to see the Ops. Branch members in action and visited 101 Corps (now called Regions) and Divisions to promote the centenary history project. An important part of such visits was to invite participation in the project by the broad spectrum of St John members, from the most senior of Commissioners and State St John Council presidents all the way down to the most junior of Juniors in the Cadet movement. Getting out to and around the Divisions was always a priority. I'm proud to report that by the time I'd done I'd visited almost a quarter of all the nation's Divisions over my two-year period of interstate travels. I suspect I'm the only person ever to have done so in the 61 years we've had a national Brigade and Operations Branch organisation.

5. Interviews

Ideally, for a history based largely on personal stories about members' experiences, I would have interviewed *all* Brigade and Ops. Branch members, past and present. That of course was impossible: they number in their many thousands and are spread across our entire wide brown land; and in any case a satisfactory interview takes 1½–2 hours to conduct. An interview-based history would therefore have added many years and tens of thousands of dollars to the project.

In mentioning interviews, I should say there was a common expectation around the Districts that I couldn't write a 'proper' history unless I interviewed *all* the local identities, especially those who'd been around the

organisation since the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Wherever possible I did so, even though the memories had often faded and not much substantial material was there to be garnered. In such instances the interview more often became a courtesy call honouring the interviewee's decades of service. Perhaps I should have had a policy that everyone with seven bars or more to the Service Medal, that is at least 42 years' efficient service, would have been interviewed. But even then the time involved and the distances to be travelled to some regional centres would have prolonged the project by years and added significantly to the cost.

There was also an expectation in most Districts that I would interview all those who had held senior office on either National or District Headquarters staff. Where the opportunity for doing so presented itself I took it, but I didn't go out of my way to chase up former Commissioners, District Superintendents, District Surgeons, Chief Nursing Officers, Chief Officers of Cadets and so on. I took the view that if they wanted to be in the book badly enough they'd find me; otherwise they could find their way into print by responding to the questionnaire that I describe below. In any case, as I soon discovered, the best stories were those at the grass roots. It's the rank and file members who usually do the hard yakka of first aid on public duty, not the holders of high office, so the best material is usually to be found in the experiences of the members of Divisions.

The interviews worked best in those States and Territories where the local project liaison officer had identified prospective interviewees, and made appointments for them to meet me during my time in the District. They worked least well when I was left to make my own arrangements. In juggling the demands on my time to visit Divisions, do archival research, appear before Council and District Staff meetings and attend public duties, lengthy interviews were what tended to get dropped first. Despite that, I did succeed in interviewing or obtaining material from six of the seven living holders of the eighth bar to the Service Medal plus both living holders of the ninth bar — Keith Bradley and Betty Stirton, each of whom was a member of my advisory panel of State and Territory liaison officers. What I did not have time to do was respond to suggestions such as, 'You ought to go and see dear old Mrs Smith, who used to be a VAD during World War II and could tell you many an entertaining tale.' And so there are many elderly Brigade stalwarts who remain

uninterviewed. On the one hand I feel somewhat remiss about this; but on the other I'm not embarrassed because time simply did not permit.

Lest you think I didn't place value on interviews, let me point out that when I was able to interview the venerable veterans and the senior Brigade and Operations Branch officers the results were most often worth the effort. I always appreciated the time the interviewees granted me, and some of the best material in the book is interview-derived. The oral historian is always obliged to conduct interviews, which remain his or her basic methodology. However, when we have a cast of many thousands, as in St John, those interviewed will be only a very tiny minority of the total membership.

6. A questionnaire

Since interviews with hundreds of present and past members was impossible, and because I couldn't visit every single Corps and Division, I did the next best thing. This was to engage the participation of all those members I was never likely to meet by preparing and distributing a simple one-sheet questionnaire that would give them the opportunity of contributing material. My questionnaire asked five basic questions that every member could answer: (1) How did you come to join St John?, (2) What has been your best case?, (3) Your worst case?, (4) Your most amusing or unusual case?, and (5) What action should the organisation be taking now to ensure that it can survive for another century? Everywhere I went I promoted the questionnaire strongly. 'If you want your story to be in the book,' I told those attending my meetings, 'complete the questionnaire and return it to me.' To ensure maximum circulation I added, 'And if you have friends with a story to tell, photocopy the questionnaire as many times as you like and give it to as many of them as possible.'

The response to this invitation was at best modest. Only a trickle of completed questionnaires flowed back to my letterbox and to my email address. Altogether I received about 180 of them over a two-year period. This meant that no more than the equivalent of 1.7% of the Ops. Branch present membership responded to the questionnaire. However, with the relatively few interviews I was able to conduct with particular individuals, this was sufficient to give me a fairly accurate cross-section of members' experiences across a seven-decade time span, from the early 1930s to the early 2000s.

In the end the low response rate for the questionnaire proved an advantage. If many more members had accepted my invitation to contribute material I might have been embarrassed in handling all the information that would then have been at my disposal. With the very few exceptions mentioned in section 8 below — those I 'censored' — I included in the book *all* the contributions that members sent me. I thus maintained faith with all those who went to the trouble of providing information, something I couldn't have done if the response rate had been much higher.

My reliance on a questionnaire as a major methodological tool may be criticised. 'You only got the views of the people who completed a questionnaire' is a valid objection. Randomness certainly typified both the questionnaire and the interviews. I received information not as a result of a scientifically designed and statistically valid sampling methodology but simply from those people who, for whatever reason, chose to provide it. Thousands of other people, many of whom could tell stories just as interesting as those I received, didn't provide information. If they had done, the book might have turned out differently. Another similar criticism is that only the most pushy were likely to respond — those determined to see their names in print. I accept such criticisms but, as I'm about to point out, the material I gathered via the questionnaire was magnificent.

7. A shift in emphasis — from institutional to personal history

As I began transcribing my interview notes and responses to the questionnaire, a sense of increasing wonderment and excitement came over me. The contributed anecdotes were just superb! Few historians ever have the opportunity of finding such magnificent material at their disposal. The stories that ordinary rank and file members could tell of how and why they joined St John, and what their best, worst and most amusing or unusual cases had been, were truly a history demanding to be written. I began realising that it didn't really matter much for *The Zambuks* that 37 years of Brigade Standing Committee minutes and 47 years of one State's annual reports had gone missing. With the material I was receiving from my Brigade and Ops. Branch informants I could write another sort of history — not the institutional and chronological kind, to be sure, but one more vibrantly lively, and one more likely to be read by rank and file members.

And so the more I wrote the more the emphasis shifted, away from an historian's analysis of an organisation and towards its members' own perceptions of their experiences in working for it. This presented a problem for structuring the book when, with the research phase finally completed by March 2001, I sat down at my computer to transform the nine filing cabinet drawers of data I'd collected into a series of chapters. On the one hand, I had a mass of organisational data I was obliged to use because you can't have an institutional history if you don't present a chronological account of its foundation, growth and evolution.

On the other hand, there was this mass of magnificent personal anecdotal experience that didn't readily fit into the institutional and chronological framework I'd set out in the chapter summary I'd developed for the original project submission back in 1997. The answer to this problem was to produce a two-part book in which the first part would consist of an outline of the organisation's growth from its foundation in England in the 1880s, its migration abroad and arrival in Australia, its naturalisation here, and then its development here in all the States and Territories right up to the present. The second part could then contain the personal material arranged thematically rather than chronologically, the main themes being: (1) how people come to join St John; (2) their experiences as they do St John work; (3) their relationship to their Divisions, which remain the framework through which most public first aid duty is done; (4) the significant achievements notched up by the organisation during its century in Australia, which to some extent must be balanced against its significant failures; and finally (5) the question of survival — the strategies to be adopted if the organisation is not to wither away and disappear over the coming decades.

8. Four drafts of the manuscript

I finished writing the first draft of the manuscript in September 2001, six months after I'd begun it. When I did a word count of what I'd written I was horrified. I had 16 chapters and 380,000 words — almost the same length as about four Ph.D. theses in history and 25% longer than the 580-page *A Century for Australia*, my first St John book back in 1983. That was plainly far too much, so what I then did was significant pruning. I began by lopping off the first two chapters and the last. Chapter 1 had been an historical account of the evolution of the modern 'recognised' and 'non-recognised' Orders of St

John from the original mediaeval Order of Knights Hospitaller. Chapter 2 had been on the foundation and growth of the St John Ambulance Association (now called Training Branch in Australia), which was everywhere the parent to the St John Ambulance Brigade. I then compressed the critical information from lopped Chapter 1 into several paragraphs then welded these into my Introduction. Similarly, I took the essential information from lopped Chapter 2, reduced it from a dozen to 2½ pages, then included it as a separate section in new Chapter 1, which deals with the formation of the Brigade in the UK and its arrival in Australia. Former Chapter 16, comprising our members' views on strategies for survival into the future, disappeared altogether. Since such opinions amounted to no more than speculation about the future, they didn't constitute capital-H history (which is always about the past), and so even though members' views were informative I could afford to exclude them to reduce the word-count.

The vigorous pruning of chapters cut the word-count of my second draft back to 330,000, but that was still far too many. I wanted to reduce the manuscript to fewer than 300,000 words so that with an index added the book would be no bigger than *A Century for Australia*. My next step was to go through each chapter and slash the paragraphs and sentences back to the bare essentials. At the same time I was acting on the request of the Priory Secretary, Chris Thorpe, and his recent successor, Len Fiori (who had just joined St John as Barry Price's replacement as National Manager [Volunteers]) to discard several sections of potential embarrassment to the organisation. These sections dealt with two main issues: (1) a cross-section of the cases dealt with by Boards of Inquiry into disciplinary matters over the past two decades; and (2) paedophilia, which for the Cadet movement remains a matter requiring eternal vigilance. Thus, readers of *The Zambuks* will never know what I wrote about Mr 'LK', an entrepreneurial Brigade officer who pocketed about \$55,000 after hiring out Brigade first aiders to the construction industry at exorbitant rates. They won't learn about Mr 'JR', a District Officer (Cadets), a serial sexual abuser of young boys who quietly disappeared from the scene to serve a gaol term for pederasty. And they won't find out about the exploits of Mrs 'UC', who left behind a trail of complaints about her dodgy financial transactions and her encouragement of immorality among Cadets. Like journalists, many historians become indignant when non-historians start telling them what they can or can't write. However, I

didn't regard Chris's and Len's sensitivity to the disciplinary cases as censorship. A client (in this case St John national management) has to feel comfortable with what a commissioned historian (me) writes; and so a truly professional historian must be prepared to negotiate the content and style of expression of a manuscript with the client. And in any case I don't think *The Zambuks* has suffered greatly by not referring to the disciplinary action taken against 'LK', 'JR', and 'UC' (which aren't their real initials).

Further pruning of the sort requested by Chris Thorpe and Len Fiori occurred after I ran the manuscript past my chief adviser and critic in all matters of propriety, taste and style — Margaret Willis (*née* Vale), to whom *The Zambuks* is dedicated. Margaret suggested that several of the anecdotes in Chapter 13 should be dropped. 'They're a bit tacky!' she said; 'And they lower the tone of the book.' As a result, *The Zambuks* does not contain the story about the snake that one member retrieved from the person of a female snake-handler in sideshow alley at the Newcastle Show, nor his story about the time he caught his Cadet Leader *in flagrante delicto*. The tale about the time a District Superintendent let his dog loose in the hotel room of the District Nursing Officer and District Officer (Cadets) is not there either. Nor is the story from a veteran of the Lake View and Star Division about the Kalgoorlie madam who refused to refund the payment of a client who died of a heart attack before he got what he'd paid for. (The client was 'under starter's orders', according to the madam, and so it was fair to keep his fee.)

Lopping of this type succeeded in cutting the word-count back to 290,000 in the third draft. With the sensitive and dubious sections eliminated and the third draft now at the required length, it was time to send the manuscript out to the panel of reviewers I'd asked to read and comment upon it. They were a select group of nine people whose opinions I value — Lynne Allen-Brown, Len Fiori, Brian Fotheringham, Stephen Miller, Barry Price, John Spencer, Betty Stirton, Chris Thorpe and Margaret Willis. I gave it to them in early October 2001 and allowed them until the end of the month. They dutifully set to work, going through the manuscript with a fine tooth comb to help me eliminate typographical errors, mistakes of fact, faulty interpretations of events and flaws in expression. After they had collectively put in several hundred hours of voluntary effort — more than some Ops. Branch Divisions will do in a year — I had a 15-page list of corrections I had to make.

Having the manuscript thus reviewed was therefore an effective and valuable form of quality control.

The views expressed by the nine reviewers ranged along a continuum, from the 'rave review' by one, who thought all St John members should be given a copy of the book to carry round in their pockets, to the opinion of the one who thought it was 'good in parts' but wanted it restructured to remove most of the personal anecdotes. Except for this latter reviewer, they all thought the manuscript did a good job of summarising a century of Brigade and Ops. Branch effort and of conveying a sense of the human warmth suffusing our members' care of the ill and injured. In our meeting to discuss the reviewers' comments, Chris Thorpe and Len Fiori decided that the majority view should prevail. That is, the book should be published 'as is', without the major restructuring recommended by the one reviewer.

With reference to that one reviewer, I have the utmost respect for his opinion. He believed that much of the oral history could be discarded because: (1) some of it is repetitious; (2) in a few instances there are stories covering more themes than one; and (3) several contributors are given more space than seems fair. He suggested that either I delete such material or summarise it in my own words. To some extent I agreed with him, because he was right on all three counts; however, I chose not to follow his advice for two main reasons. First, I took the view that if several hundred members had taken the trouble to accept my invitation to provide contributions, I had an obligation to use their offerings. Second, ordinary Operations Branch members rather than critical professional historians were the main target audience. From having met hundreds of them over the previous two years I knew they would be more interested in, and likely to read, simply expressed personal anecdotes than the most elegantly written of institutional material. Only time will tell if my reviewer or I were right.

Keying into my computer the 15 pages of corrections took another week, after which I had a fourth and final draft of the manuscript in both print and computer disk versions to pass over to my graphic designer, Louise Gardner of LG2graphics in Canberra, for typesetting, lay-out and book design. Louise received the manuscript in mid-November 2001, and while she set to work, I selected the 150 photographs I wanted to include in the book, compiled my three indexes (one each for names, topics and contributed anecdotes), and

drew up the list of the 272 contributors forming the appendix.

A crisis with the photographs soon emerged. When I reviewed the collection of photographs I had at my disposal I was appalled by their paucity. I'd gathered them as I'd gone from District to District, as I'd seen them and as their owners had been prepared to let me have copies. There were some first rate individual images but collectively they were somewhat underwhelming. I therefore sent out an urgent appeal to the State and Territory CEOs and publicity managers for five recent professional standard images each. 'If you want your State/Territory to have its fair share of high quality pictures in the book, please respond to this request by the end of next week,' was the gist of it. I also raided the photographic archive of Tim Cansfield-Smith, the St John National Communications Manager. This resulted in a suite of additional excellent images (including the three on the front cover of *The Zambuks*). I thank Tim and the CEOs and publicity managers for heeding my 'SOS'. All except one responded promptly and generously. (The fact that there's a State with only one photograph among the 165 eventually used reflects the failure of that State's CEO to act on my plea.)

After Louise had incorporated the additional photographs and keyed in my proof-reading amendments, she transferred the typeset book to a CD disk, which was then passed over to Panther Printing, a sub-division of the Canberra printing firm, Pirie. Panther-Pirie transferred the material to film then printed a blue 'dye-line' copy of the book for my final proof-reading. That took me another couple of days, by which time the book had been proof-read four times. Hopefully, that many readings will have succeeded in correcting most of the 'typos', but inevitably there'll be some that will have slipped through. I found one as I was writing this very paragraph. It's right at the front, in the table of contents. I'm amazed at how it survived the editing and proof-reading stages in such a prominent position, and it will hit me like a fist in the face each time I open the book from now on. Sadly, that's the way with the printed word, for even the most vigilant of proof-reading teams eventually suffer 'word blindness' and will overlook seemingly glaring errors through too much looking.

The final stage of production was when Panther-Pirie did the printing and binding, which took only a week. The day I collected the first copies, Friday 12th April, was a red-letter day, one in which my family enjoyed a

happy trifecta. As well as being able to collect copies in time for Len Fiori to take three away to London (one each for the Lord Prior, the Secretary-General and the St John's Gate library) on his visit there for a meeting of the Grand Council of the Order, it was Margaret's birthday and that afternoon I received my OAM award at Government House, Yarralumla, from our Prior, Peter Hollingworth. (I should say here that as he pinned my medal on my jacket he said, 'Well done. Congratulations. You deserve this;' to which I replied, 'I'm honoured and delighted to be receiving it, from you in particular!' He gave me a quizzical little look, but seemed pleased at my words.)

9. Questions of balance

The balance of pictorial material between the States and Territories in *The Zambuks* referred to above points to an important methodological issue in researching and writing the book. This is the question of balance. To be accepted by its nation-wide readership the book had to maintain balance in certain critical dimensions. For example:

- The book couldn't be seen to be one 'belonging' to either the National or District Headquarters staff officers, reflecting mainly their experience. Instead it had to 'belong' to the 'grass-roots' of the organisation by reflecting the experience of ranks and file members.

- Similarly, the book couldn't be allowed to be dominated by the experience of the two or three largest Districts — New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia — at the expense of material from the other five.

At the same time there were other aspects of balance to consider:

- *The Zambuks* couldn't be a book about the Brigade and Ops. Branch in the capital cities alone, but must include a fair share of material from the regional cities, the country towns and the rural areas.
- It couldn't be a book in which the stories were mostly told by men, when half the organisation consists of women.
- Nor could we have a book mainly about adults when almost half (45%) of the members are Cadets and Juniors.
- In yet another dimension, the book couldn't dwell too long on the distant past, no matter how fascinating, at the expense of more recent history, particularly that of the past decade, which was a period of many reforms,

the historical effects of some of which still aren't apparent.

I'll have to let my readers judge my success in maintaining balance across these multiple dimensions. They might conclude that the book lacks balance, but if so I'd plead that this was a quality I continually strove to maintain.

10. Choice of title

Readers of the book beyond New South Wales might be puzzled by the choice of titles. 'Zambuk', a nickname derived from 'Zam-Buk', the brand name of a popular herbal liniment originally manufactured by the British pharmaceutical firm Fisons and produced in Australia under licence, soon came to be applied to the Brigade first aiders who carried it in their first aid kits early last century. The paper I delivered to last seminar of this Historical Society in Brisbane last year dealt with both the liniment and nickname at some length, so I won't go over that ground now. Suffice to say here that to me it was an outstandingly obvious choice for a book title. 'Zambuk', specifically meaning a St John Ambulance first aider on public duty, is the only reference to St John in any Australian etymological dictionary. Though it has dropped out of popular use in recent decades, it's a name to be proud of because the football-going public used it with great affection.

The main title, I must say, was *not* one wilfully imposed on the book by an historian who remained obstinately impervious to complaints from beyond New South Wales that it was little known elsewhere. It was one chosen from among about 70 others in a 'select-the-book-title' competition conducted over the second half of 2000. The competition attracted entrants from all the mainland States and Territories. Most of the alternatives were as unexceptional as they were predictable — 'First Aid Service for Humanity', 'St John Ambulance Caring for Australia', 'In the Company of Saints' and so on. None of them had the same spark of genius obvious in 'The Zambuks', which was jointly suggested by Mark Christie of South Australia and Eddie Furnell and John Ward of New South Wales, whose prize as competition winners included having their names on the title page.

I immediately liked Mark's, Eddie's and John's suggestion. I'd already thought of it myself and was hoping one of the 'select-the-book-title' competition entrants might suggest it. And what does 'The Zambuks' have in its favour? Well, it's short, succinct and memorable. It's unique to the organisation whose centenary the book celebrates. It's a bit

quirky and off-beat. It indicates something of the public affection for the organisation. And even though it's perhaps more specific to New South Wales than to the other States and Territories it's an Australian colloquialism to be worn as a badge of pride by all St John members across the nation.

Despite the fact that the competition was widely advertised, fairly conducted and the choice of 'Zambuks' was endorsed by a large majority of the 11 members of the project reference group and the State and Territory advisory panel as well as the Chief Commissioner, there was a period of several months during 2001 when it seemed that some other title might be imposed on the book. One member of the State and Territory advisory panel wrote to express displeasure with 'Zambuks'. 'That name is not known in this District,' the letter went, 'so if you insist on using it no one here will buy your book.' The letter then went on to propose 'From Band-aids to Defibrillators' as the main title. I responded by saying that: (1) I was disappointed at being thus pressured because the title had been fairly and democratically chosen after a well advertised national competition in which all Ops. Branch members had been invited to participate; (2) I don't regard the book as 'mine' because it 'belongs' to the wider St John community, and particularly the grass-roots members; (3) if I dropped 'The Zambuks' in favour of 'From Band-aids to Defibrillators' there could well be many people who'd refuse to buy the book because they disliked *that* title; and (4) it would be a pity if no one in the panel member's District bought the book because many of its contributors were from that particular District.

'The Zambuks' struck another obstacle a little later when it was rumoured that certain high placed members of the Australian Executive didn't like it. Fortunately for 'The Zambuks' Lynne Allen-Brown and Len Fiori rallied to its cause. They insisted that the title had been fairly chosen by due process. Changing it to something else would embarrass me as the author and competition organiser, Lynne as the Chief Commissioner who'd already announced the competition results at the Priory conference in June 2001, and the three competition winners, who'd already told their friends and families their names would be on the title page. Fortunately good sense eventually prevailed and 'The Zambuks' remained in place. As Betty Stirton has remarked, it's a title that helps the book say 'Pick me up and read me!' And as Jenny Perkins, the St John National Marketing

Manager, remarks, it's the only one among the 72 titles suggested that she could readily market.

11. Research experiences

Travelling the Districts to visit Divisions, promote the project, invite members' participation via my questionnaire, conduct interviews and undertake archival research produced a mixed bag of experiences. In some Districts all these tasks proceeded smoothly because the State and Territory CEOs, District staff, the District Secretaries and the project liaison officers all gave me enthusiastic support. They had the relevant archival material ready. They'd arranged an itinerary of visits to selected Divisions and public duties. They'd organised meetings and interviews with key informants. And they promptly responded to all my requests for information, photocopies and photographs. Elsewhere the arrangements were less satisfactory. In a couple of Districts I arrived to find that no arrangements had been made for my visit, and that if I wished to visit Divisions, view public duties and conduct interviews I must make the necessary arrangements myself.

My contacts with Divisions were also a mixed bag. In some I was greeted warmly as an honoured guest, given ample time to explain the project, invite members' participation, answer questions, gather personal anecdotes from those willing to provide them, and was then showered with gifts before departing. In a few I ran up against a wall of blank indifference and in several hostility. It was as if their members resented the intrusion of an interloper from distant Canberra who seemed as remote from their concerns and interests as the far side of the moon. Generally, however, most members in most Divisions seemed to appreciate the trouble I'd taken in visiting them. Most could understand what I was attempting and thought it a good idea, and many subsequently accepted my invitation to contribute to the book. As a result there were few Divisions that I visited that did not provide material that eventually found its way into the book.

For some reason Cadet Divisions provided both my most trying and most rewarding experiences. In one Division among the 30 Cadets present I found an insolent, disruptive little clique who seemed intent on trying me out. At the beginning of my presentation they kept interjecting with wise-crack remarks. They saw the question time at the end as another opportunity for making merry at my expense. On this visit I found that my array of

long-dormant secondary school teacher's class management skills stood me in good stead, helping me get through my hour with them unscathed and with the integrity of the presentation intact. In contrast to that Division was another where the 40 Cadets assembled for my visit listened to my presentation with rapt attention then for the rest of the evening kept peppering me with perceptive questions and heart-warming personal anecdotes about their St John experiences. They were still at it as their parents arrived to drive them home, and they kept it up as I slowly extricated myself, wending my way across the carpark to my car to collect Margaret for what would now be a very late evening meal. Somehow I'd struck a chord with them, and in the warm after-glow of their enthusiasm I rather regretted giving up secondary teaching 17 years previously.

12. Some personal benefits

For me personally the benefits of the project have been many and varied. First, it gave me the opportunity to renew and reaffirm many friendships made through my earlier St John work. Second, it enabled me to make a host of new ones. The result is that I now have a widespread network of St John friends extending across all eight States and Territories. Third, it was one factor contributing to the formation of this Historical Society, being secretary to which has been a very fulfilling part time job for me over the past two years. Fourth, it has taken me and Margaret to all eight States and Territories, thus giving us the opportunity to travel widely in the three years following our retirement from the salaried workforce. Fifth, it probably helped earn me the Order of Australia Medal I was awarded in this year's Australia Day honours list for my work on St John history. Sixth, it helped me make contact with some very dedicated, very able and very interesting people who do most interesting things. In this context I mention Vince Little and Franklin Bridgewater and their work in East Timor; Wendy Scurr and her heroism during the Port Arthur massacre; Beth Dawson and her long parallel careers in nursing and in St John; John Spencer and his magnificent contribution to the Sydney Olympics; Ian Kaye-Eddie and the apparently effortless ease with which he ensures that the Western Australian St John Ambulance Service is the world's largest and among the best; John Pearn and his multiple roles as leading paediatrician, senior military officer, eminent historian and global traveller; Betty Stirton and her multiple skills in calligraphy, floral art, archives development

and encouraging the kind of youthful talent we see in Loredana Napoli; and Kevin Young, the quiet achiever from the Lake View & Star mine near Kalgoorlie, whose exploits as an underground first aider could fill several books the size of *The Zambuks*. (This, by the way, is in addition to Kevin's exemplary generosity to this Historical Society. His donations to it amounted to 38% of its entire income in 2001–02.) All these special mentions are in addition to the hundreds of Ops. Branch members I've met who weekly don the black and white uniform to serve the Australian public professionally but as volunteers.

Among the interesting people I've met I should also mention Lesley King, Deputy Ops. Branch Commissioner in the Northern Territory, who emerged from the ruck as a notable contributor to the centenary history project. Apart from her elegantly written contributions to the book, Lesley located the John Masefield verse that, quoted on the reverse of the title page, so aptly sets the tone for a book about voluntary community service. She also provided valuable advice on the Northern Territory phase of the project, and gave me encouragement at several critical junctures. Lesley, as it turns out, is possibly a distant cousin of mine. We have copper-mining great-grandfathers who not only migrated to Australia at about the same time from the same tiny mining village in Cornwall, the quaintly named Three Burrows, but also had the same surname. To signify our mutual interest in Cornish genealogy and history we've taken to calling each other 'Cousin'. As this indicates, St John is a great generator of lasting friendships.

Finally, there has been the benefit the project has had in giving my life purpose and direction, not to mention the excellent occupational therapy the project provided as I learnt that there was a fulfilling life to be lived after prostate cancer. 'Count your blessings one by one' says an old hymn. Good advice for me as I contemplate what I've gained from the project!

13. Benefits to St John

Apart from there now being an artefact to be an enduring reminder of the Brigade and Ops. Branch centenary in Australia, the benefits to St John are not so obvious or tangible as they are for me. I nevertheless hope that *The Zambuks* assists St John by helping Ops. Branch members feel proud of their membership and by encouraging them to rededicate themselves to serving the organisation and the public. I'd like to think

the book would help the public appreciate and support the organisation better; and I'd be elated if it helped attract new members. I trust that it assists the St John leadership and rank and file members to continue thinking seriously about the future direction of the organisation, and of strategies for survival in a competitive world. I'd be very pleased if it encouraged St John members to take their heritage more seriously, and would be delighted if it stimulated further research, writing and publication of St John history. I'd be gratified if the book helped the 'corporatisers' among our State, Territory and national managers to understand that St John is not just a provider of commercial first aid services but also fulfils critical cultural and humanitarian functions that aren't readily assessable by econometric yardsticks. And my time won't have been wasted if it helps them understand, first, that St John in this nation is a federal organisation with a federal headquarters in Canberra that previous generations of St John workers toiled long and hard to create; and, second, demolishing what previous generations laboured to achieve would be a folly for which future St John generations might curse them.

The critical question under the present sub-heading is whether or not the effort and expense that went into *The Zambuks* have been worthwhile. That's a question best answered by the people who buy and read the book. However, in justification of the cost, let me say that the book will eventually prove to have been cost neutral. Priory headquarters spent about \$19,300 in sending me round Australia to conduct my research. The book design, typesetting, printing and binding cost another \$36,000. The project therefore cost \$55,300. As the print run was 3000, the cost per book is \$18.43. If the book is sold for a little more than that, say \$20, the expenditure on production, distribution and related 'on-costs' will be completely covered if all copies are sold, even allowing for a limited number of complimentary copies, say 100, that might go to the overseas Pories or as review copies to the print media.

14. Representative anecdotes

At this point I'd like to quote several of the personal anecdotes that make *The Zambuks* such a fascinating compilation of members' personal experiences. I'll now read to you four of my favourites, one each to illustrate the themes 'Why I joined St John', 'My best case', 'My worst case' and 'My most unusual case'. The authors are, respectively, Angie Smeralda of Queensland, Lesley King of the Northern

Territory, our own Historical Society president, Brian Fotheringham of South Australia, and Terry King of Victoria.

The black spot at the bottom of our hill

My family used to live in Longlands Street, East Brisbane, near the intersection with Stanley Street at the bottom of a steep hill where many accidents happened — a traffic 'black spot'. Every time we heard an accident my sister and I ran outside and down to the street corner to watch. The police often arrived, and if anyone was injured an ambulance as well. It was always exciting for us to see the police, tow trucks and ambulances deal with the wrecked cars and injured victims, and then get the traffic flowing normally again. Eventually, after yet another accident, I said to my sister, 'Instead of just gawking at the people who get injured why don't we learn first aid so we can help them?' We didn't know where to go to learn first aid, so we went back home and after looking through the newspaper for a while found an advertisement for St John Ambulance first aid classes. We both enrolled, did a senior first aid course, passed and received our first aid certificates. That was in 1983. I still didn't feel confident enough to treat actual injuries so I decided to join the St John Ambulance Brigade to build up my knowledge and skill. I filled out an application form and sent it to St John House here in Brisbane. Several days later Shirley Watson, the District Superintendent, called me in for an interview. After deciding that I might be a useful addition to the Brigade, she began talking of the Divisions I could join, but one of the others interviewing me said 'Angie would be happier at Brisbane Central No. 1 Division, and they're in need of new members.' So I was sent to Brisbane Central No. 1, where Nancy Tranby was the Superintendent. I've remained there ever since, working my way up as corporal, sergeant, officer and eventually Superintendent in 1997. I've also been working as the receptionist at St John House since 1985, so St John Ambulance has become my career. It's a vocation I owe to the black spot at the bottom of the Stanley Street hill.

(Angie Smeralda, Brisbane, 1999)

An angel told me I'd be all right

My best case happened when I was working as an ambulance volunteer here in Darwin. We answered a call to an accident in which a young man had been pitched through the windscreen of his car. When we got there he was lying sprawled unconscious on the bonnet. He had horrifying facial injuries. As we arrived at the casualty ward of the hospital our patient was 'phasing' between semi and total unconsciousness. The casualty ward staff were very busy, engaged in other emergencies, so I asked for clearance to stay with the patient until a doctor could see him. Purely on instinct I kept talking to him — the usual reassurance: 'You're going to be

OK, Michael', 'Breathe slowly, now in, now out' etc. The wait was considerable so I continued monitoring his vital signs. I also helped myself to a sterile tray and began removing what I could of the glass embedded in his wounds, still talking to him as I did so. More than an hour later the doctor arrived. I handed over then left. Several months later I was talking to a friend in the supermarket. My conversation finished and I began to move on when I felt a touch on my shoulder and heard a voice say, 'Excuse me, but are you a nurse?' Startled, I looked around into a face I didn't know. I explained that I was a nurse but didn't work at the hospital. The young man then explained the reason for his question. He'd been in an accident some time ago, he said, and remembered what he thought at the time was an angel telling him he was going to be all right when he feared he was going to die. He said he'd just heard that voice again. It was of course my unconscious patient. And his scars were barely visible.

(Lesley King, Darwin, 2000)

Scrawny two-week old baby

At about dawn one morning when I was doing 'sleep-on' duty at the Hindmarsh ambulance transport centre in suburban Adelaide, Charlie Scolyer woke me to say a child had telephoned the ambulance switchboard asking for help. Charlie manned the switchboard for many years and his calm manner soothed many an agitated caller. The address given by the girl was in nearby Croydon. In the dim light as we arrived, the house seemed obviously in need of repair and the garden was grossly overgrown. The door was opened by the young girl, who was probably scarcely five years old. Inside the house all was in darkness. The electricity had been cut off. A thin, pale woman handed me a scrawny two-week old baby without saying a word. I wrapped the baby in a blanket and held him in my arms on the trip to the Adelaide Children's Hospital. The mother remained at home. The nursing staff at the hospital were immediately concerned about the state of the baby. I learned later that the infant, despite receiving the best of care, died soon after admission. This episode undoubtedly influenced my decision to work in a paediatric setting. I later became Director of Medical Services at the hospital.

(Brian Fotheringham, Adelaide, 1999)

Crawling between the legs of the spectators

Back in 1959, when I was a Cadet aged 10, I carried out an emergency child birth delivery at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. I was on duty with the St John Ambulance Brigade under Merv Goodall in the old southern stand on the day of the Australian rules football grand-final between Melbourne and Essendon. There was a huge crowd of 103,500 there that day to see Melbourne win comfortably by 32 points. They were packed shoulder to shoulder.

After the match had got under way a pregnant woman at the top of the stand went into labour. A call for the St John team to help came down through the crowd. The spectators were packed together so tightly that that our team couldn't make their way up through the crush of people. I was small and slight of build so Merv sent me up to investigate. I got to the woman by crawling between the legs of the spectators. When I finally reached her, she was about to have her baby. I didn't know how to handle a case like this so I called out to Merv to ask what I should do next. The members of the crowd relayed my question down to him. He called back, giving me instructions, the people in the crowd relaying these to me step by step. Suddenly the baby's head appeared and within a few minutes the rest of it had emerged. In the meantime Merv had obtained a stretcher and a blanket, which were passed up to me in relay above the crowd. The people around me helped me place the mother and baby on the stretcher, which was then carefully passed back down to Merv over the spectators' heads. The St John team carried the stretcher out to the ambulance, which took the mother and baby away to hospital. I can't remember whether the baby was a boy or girl. I often wonder what became of him or her, who would be 40 years old now. I'd like to know if he or she knows that he or she was helped into the world by a skinny little kid who until then didn't know anything about emergency child birth.

(Terry King, Melbourne, October 1999)

The stories I've just read are a sample of the many I gathered as I travelled the country doing my research for *The Zambuks*. I hope you like them as much as I do. If you do, you'll find 420 more from all over Australia in the book.

15. Have I changed my mind about the organisation since I started?

While I was working on the submission to Chris Thorpe that began the project I asked Charles Campbell for advice. He was surprised to think I wanted to go ahead with a book on the Brigade and Ops. Branch because he'd concluded that I was prejudiced against the organisation. My Western Australian centenary St John history in 1992, he reminded me, had emphasised the ambulance service at the expense of the Brigade, so he wondered if I could do the subject justice.

I was certainly critical of the institution but I didn't think I was prejudiced. From my outsider's perspective it looked like an organisation caught in a time-warp. It seemed rigidly hierarchical, dominated by men and by the medical profession. Women rarely filled senior positions. The jacket of the men's uniform looked like a black version of the

tunic my uncle wore when he sailed away to Gallipoli in 1915. The Cadets reminded me of the Scout troop I'd belonged to back in the late 1940s. The military-style rank structure, insignia of rank, formal parades, saluting and other quasi-military appurtenances seemed out of place in an era when military conscription was a fast fading memory. A look at the membership list suggested an overwhelmingly Anglo-Celtic institution that had failed to attract members from the non-English speaking immigrant communities who had transformed the demographic face of Australia in the decades since World War II. The difficulty many members had in buttoning up their shirts and jackets was something else again. The late John Cornwall's jibe, that the Brigade was the 'Dads' Army' of the emergency services, seemed apt.

If that was what I thought then, what do I think 4½ years later? I must say that I now realise I was wrong on most counts. Thus:

- The rigid hierarchy is more apparent than real because a healthy Australian egalitarian and democratic spirit pervades the organisation.
- The decades of doctor domination, when all Commissioners were, *ipso facto*, medical practitioners have long gone, and senior positions are now filled on merit by representatives of a host of other professions.
- Women are now routinely appointed on merit to the highest positions.
- The introduction a decade ago of a unisex uniform of slacks, jumper, bomber jacket and Akubra-style hat means that most of the silver-buttoned black tunics can be consigned to museums.
- Having visited many Cadet Divisions I'm an enthusiast for the Cadet movement, which I think is the best of services available to Australia's young people.
- What Willis Marshall has called 'the buttons and bows' are still on the uniform, but the Ops. Branch is self-evidently a civilian community welfare organisation not an adjunct of the armed services.
- I've come to appreciate that changing the ethnic and racial mix of the organisation is not a goal to be achieved through social engineering. In any case it's happening by osmosis. Non-European faces were on parade in most of the Divisions I visited; and even though there might only be one or two present the important thing is that

they're there. If you doubt St John's ability to attract and assimilate successfully peoples of diverse race and ethnicity, go along to a meeting of the South Sydney Cadets to be pleasantly surprised.

- As for those who can't do up their buttons, the fitness for duty policy will eventually take care of that.
- Finally, let me observe that 'Dads' Army' it ain't. It's far from the aged, decrepit, incompetent, comic outfit that that particular pejorative epithet suggests. Here let me quote from page 370, the very last of the text. After briefly looking at some of the challenges facing the organisation I end with these words:

Fortunately for St John, the reforms put in place during the 1990s had imparted a new momentum that promised to carry the Operations Branch well into the first decades of the twenty-first century. The recent process of reform ensured that the organisation entered the new century in reasonably robust health. It was perhaps better led, better managed, better planned, better trained, better co-ordinated, better equipped, better funded and more vigorously youthful than at any time previously. Further, it was less parochial, less set in its ways, less preoccupied with questions of status and precedence, and less content with doing things as they had customarily been done. The odds for continuing on for another century might have been long, but survival into the coming decades was a safe bet.

16. How good a book is *The Zambuks*?

I'll finish this paper by reviewing my own book — something that the 'Lit. Crit.' crowd would say is bad etiquette.

The minuses

I'll start by saying that the book *is* somewhat repetitious, for many of the personal anecdotes seem similar, particularly in Chapter 7, where members say how they came to join St John. In several places the anecdotes *are* confused, because the 'joining St John' stories haven't been separated out from the stories about 'best case', 'worst case' and 'most amusing or unusual case'. I'll also say that the book is *not* well balanced structurally because it skips over whole decades-long stretches of time when the Brigade was doing outstanding work and then dwells on the minute detail of just one decade, the 1990s. Similarly, it devotes almost one whole chapter to the St John involvement with the ambulance service in South Australia but largely ignores the continuing St John ambulance services in the Northern Territory

and Western Australia, and also the failed St John experiment with ambulances in Tasmania during the 1960s.

Another problem about *The Zambuks* is that, like all histories, it's nowhere near a complete history. It never could have been. As mentioned, I had nine filing cabinet drawers of information that I'd gathered over four years. I ended up using the equivalent of about half of just one of those drawers. Each time I open the filing cabinets I see something else I could have used but didn't. "This item's brilliant," I think to myself ruefully, "so why didn't I use it?" The answer is that the historian has to be ruthless in selecting some material and rejecting other. Using the rejected material and ignoring what was selected would result in an entirely different book. A better book? A more accurate book? Who knows? All we can say is that it wouldn't be *The Zambuks*; and if *The Zambuks* is a good book the process of selecting its material must have been worthwhile.

There are other criticisms I can make. I'm a little disappointed with the range of illustrations, given that St John Ambulance must be one of the most photographed institutions in the entire span of human history. I used the best of what was available, but the selection could have been better in quality, of greater historical interest and more representative of all eight Districts. I'm also disappointed that some people who should have contributed to *The Zambuks* aren't to be found in the appendix setting out contributors' names. The reason for this, I suppose, is that they were too busy or insufficiently interested or not determined enough to provide material. Perhaps they thought I should have sought them out for interviews. If so, they were wrong, for reasons already explained; yet I still regret their absence from the slice of history that *The Zambuks* represents. They'll probably feel aggrieved that they aren't in the book, but they did have ample opportunity to secure a place there.

The pluses

If these are some of the faults, what are some of the strengths? The main one is that the book serves as an amplifier for the several hundred rank and file St John members who speak through it of their experiences across a 70-year period. In *The Zambuks* they recount their St John adventures in their own words. One cannot read these without hearing the authentic voice of the tens of thousands of ordinary Australians who have joined the St John Ambulance Brigade and Operations

Branch since 1901 and who have consequently made its achievements possible.

Hearing that voice is, for me at least, a humbling experience. For all my higher degrees and awards, my ability to string together book-length sequences of words, and my stamina in beavering away at historical research projects for thousands of hours, I know I don't have what the owners of that voice possess. This is the inclination, interest, application, perseverance, healing skills or the God-given gift of helping those in need to do what those tens of thousands of Zambuks have been doing somewhere in Australia on every day of every year since the formation of our first Brigade Divisions in Glebe in March 1903. Whatever else *The Zambuks* might be, I hope it expresses a large measure of the admiration I feel for anyone who wears the black and white uniform.

Whether or not *The Zambuks* is a good book is a question I'll leave to the critics. I've been so closely associated with it for so long that I can't be expected to know the answer. What I do know is that researching and writing it was good occupational therapy — excellent Aid of the Third Kind. It has probably been my last St John book, unless of course someone decides to let me loose in the Ophthalmic Hospital archives. The only other thing I need say about *The Zambuks* is that it's the one book among my St John five that I wasn't asked to write. This was the one I pleaded to be allowed to write. And that, I hope, says something about my respect for Australia's Zambuks past, present and future.

The author: *Ian Howie-Willis came into St John at the end of 1979 to produce the 'Priory history', the book commemorating the centenary of St John activity in Australia. This book, A Century For Australia, was published in 1983. Since then Ian has written other St John books, always as a volunteer — centenary histories of the organisation in South Australia and Western Australia and the 50th anniversary history of the Western Australian St John Commandery (authorship of which he shared with Edith Khangure). Most recently he has compiled The Zambuks, the official history of the St John Ambulance Brigade and Operations Branch in Australia. In between working on The Zambuks, he has been the interim secretary of this Historical Society for the past two years. His official St John position is Assistant Priory Librarian, but since that title doesn't say much about what he actually does, he's informally known as the Priory Historian. He was awarded the Order of Australia Medal for his work on St John history in the Australia Day honours list in January 2002.*

Away from St John Ian has been a journalist, teacher, public servant and practising professional historian, his present occupation. He and Margaret (his wife, a member of the St John Research Ethics Committee) have spent the 40 years of their married life

living in western Victoria, Papua New Guinea, England, Canberra and since 1994 part-time at Tawonga in north-eastern Victoria, where they have a holiday house. Ian is the author or co-author of 14 books, most of which weren't about St John Ambulance. Now that The Zambuks is out of the way, he plans to write a history of Cornwall, from where four of his eight great-grandparents migrated to the Victorian goldfields during the nineteenth century.

Awards of the Historical Society

At the Historical Society's inaugural annual general meeting in Sydney in June 2002 a number of awards and presentations were made to the Society's benefactors. These were as follows:

Life membership

- **Kevin Young** (WA), for his generosity: his gifts to the Society were a major portion of its income in its foundation year.

Certificates of appreciation

- **Villis Marshall** (Board of Directors), for his strong support and encouragement of the Society in the critical period leading up to its formal establishment.
- **Len Fiori** (Australian Office), for his strong support and encouragement of the Society during its foundation year.
- **Therese Reilly** (Australian Office), for her advice on financial matters and for auditing the Society's accounts.
- **Betty Stirton** (NSW), for her preparation of historical displays at the launching of *The Zambuks* and at the Society's first AGM.
- **Loredana Napoli** (NSW), for designing managing production of the bookmark that the Society released to mark the publication of *The Zambuks*.

The Society's members will join the management committee in congratulating these worthy people on their awards.

Ian Howie-Willis
Editor
14 April 2003