



# Pro Utilitate

Preserving and promoting the St John heritage.

Newsletter of The St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia

Issue 2021/2

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## Transition

*Pro Utilitate* is delighted to announce that it has a new Editor, **Dr Elizabeth Ellis OStJ**, who succeeds **Ian Howie-Willis**. Ian held the position for 20 years, but has decided that's ample time for anyone to hold any position in any organisation. It would be clear to all who know Ian that he will be impossible to replace given his extensive knowledge of the history of the Order and his extensive network of like-minded colleagues.

## Thank you, Dr Ian Howie-Willis

On behalf of the Historical Society, and all St John colleagues, I want to congratulate and thank Ian Howie-Willis for bringing us our quarterly newsletter *Pro Utilitate*, over the past 20 years. This edition marks the transition between Ian and our new editor, Dr Elizabeth Ellis.



Describing *Pro Utilitate* as a 'newsletter' is a serious understatement. Ian has consistently produced a comprehensive, erudite, entertaining, and authoritative resource, which rightly sits beside our journal *St John History*. Ian, producing *Pro Utilitate* four times a year has been a serious amount of work, for which we are immensely grateful, and for which you have not been thanked often enough. Ian, we know that you will humbly brush aside any attempts at praise, however you thoroughly deserve to be in the spotlight as we reflect on what 20 years of *Pro Utilitate* has really meant to our Historical Society.

From the very inception of our Society, Ian saw the need for a regular newsletter. Through it, we have felt connected and informed, in a personal way—despite the dispersion of our members throughout Australia. *Pro Utilitate* has helped to inspire and encourage others to undertake their own historical research. *Pro Utilitate* has opened up the vast treasures of our history to a wide readership, which includes many overseas colleagues.

## Who's in Order?

Dr Matthew Glozier was admitted as an Officer in the Order on 19 February 2021 in Canberra. Matthew not only contributes to many publications but is responsible for producing the last four volumes of *St John History*, the Society's annual journal. In addition to this, he is currently co-author and team leader for the writing of the history of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group.



His citation stated: 'He is among the very brightest and most experienced historians in St John. The experience, guidance and dedication he freely gives ... is assuring the history of St John Ambulance is and will continue to be preserved for many years to come.'



**Mrs Kylie Seidel** was also at the Canberra investiture for her promotion to 'OStJ'. Readers will know Mrs Seidel as the

all-efficient and ever-obliging Priory Manager in the Australian Office of St John Ambulance Australia. Among her many tasks, Kylie manages distribution of *Pro Utilitate*—a task she has attended to for the past 14 years. Without Mrs Seidel's support, the newsletter could hardly exist!

## Transition continued

Ian's capacity to produce *Pro Utilitate* is hardly surprising—he is a PhD level historian, and the author of more than 20 books. Ian's involvement with St John began with the publication of *A Century for Australia* in 1983. The latest ambitious endeavour is *A Beacon of Hope* (co-authored with John Pearn and Matthew Glozier) to mark the 140th anniversary of the St John Eye Hospital.

Recently, our Lord Prior, Professor Mark Compton, said to me that 'Ian's dedication and devotion to the Order and the preservation and promotion of its history, has meant that thousands of St John members across Australia and further afield have learnt more about our rich repository of history; who we are; where we came from and giving us lessons as we march ever-forward'.

The publication of this edition marks the passing-on of the editorial torch, to Dr Elizabeth Ellis. I am delighted that Elizabeth has agreed to take on this challenging role, and I join with Ian in wishing Elizabeth every success as she brings her own flair and style to the pages of *Pro Utilitate*.

## David Fahey

*(I am grateful to John Pearn, Allan Mawdsley, Brian Fotheringham, and Mark Compton, who assisted with compiling these words of thanks.)*

As our readers well know, Elizabeth has been *Pro Utilitate*'s Book Review Editor for the past two years and therefore has the requisite literary and editorial experience for taking over as Editor. For those unfamiliar with Elizabeth, she had an academic career in physiotherapy at the University of Sydney for 30 years and has a number of postgraduate degrees. Since retirement, she has been pursuing studies in literature, Indigenous studies and history, and presenting lectures on the Hospitallers to the University of the Third Age. She is also married to **Professor Mark Compton GCStJ**, the current Lord Prior of the Most Venerable Order of St John; and as such she's a proud member of a 'four-generation' St John family. Along with Mark, she is an active volunteer with their local fire services.

Elizabeth's appointment has been unanimously approved by the Historical Society's Executive, and enthusiastically endorsed by the wider Management Committee. As one Committee

**Who's in Order continued**

St John WA's former Chair-person and Commandery Lieutenant **Gerard King KStJ** was recognised in the Australia Day Honours list as a Member of the Order of Australia.



Gerard has given over 40 years of voluntary service to the community through St John.

member discovered during the great 2014 Historical Tour of Order of St John sites in the Mediterranean, 'Elizabeth accompanied us on the tour; and I soon learned that her knowledge of the history of the Order and the Crusades was truly inspiring. It will be truly a privilege to have her as our next Editor!' In commending Elizabeth as his successor, Ian writes: 'I've got to know Elizabeth through her book reviews, over the past 18 months or so. Through this work for the Historical Society, Elizabeth has amply demonstrated that she has in abundance the requisite literary and editorial abilities, knowledge of St John history, negotiating skills, respect among the staff of the Australian Office of St John, and the long-term commitment to the Order, to be a superlative Editor.'

And so, *Pro Utilitate* enters a new era in its development. In the meantime, however, readers can be assured that, whoever the Editor might

be at any particular time, the newsletter exists to serve the Historical Society, and depends on reader input. This will be as true under Elizabeth's editorship as it was under Ian's.

## Vale, John Spencer



It was with deep sadness, that we reported the death earlier this year, of a distinguished member of the Historical Society and a truly great St John servant—**John Spencer AM, GCStJ** (1939–2021). The following tribute is by Peter LeCornu, the Deputy Priory Secretary and former CEO of St John Ambulance Australia.

It is with much sadness that I announce the passing of John Spencer this morning (10 February 2021) after a long battle with cancer. John was one of our longest-serving volunteers and made an immeasurable contribution to St John Ambulance in Australia, particularly in St John Ambulance NSW. For those who may not know John's history, the following is a summary of his contribution.

John Spencer had a long and distinguished involvement in St John Ambulance Australia. He joined St John as a Cadet in 1949, with the Orange Ambulance Cadet Division. He showed great leadership potential and became the Officer-in-Charge of the Orange Ambulance Cadet Division in 1956. After moving to Sydney for work, he formed the North Sydney Police Boys Ambulance Cadet Division in 1960, and was appointed Superintendent in 1961.

John held many State leadership positions in St John NSW. He started as Treasurer in 1973, with St John NSW benefiting from his skills as an accountant. He held the position of District Superintendent from 1984 to 1986, and Commissioner from 1993 to 1999. He was a Director of St John Ambulance (NSW) for 16 years including three years as Deputy Chairman, and six years as NSW Director of Training.

## The 'challenge'

Can you name the regalia in this image? [Matthew Glozier](#) believes that someone may even know the identity of who they belonged to!



## Previous 'challenge'

[Allan Mawdsley](#) set the previous Challenge to identify the Maltese Cross medal shown here.



As you can see, it has alternating Scotch thistles and lions passant between the four arms of the cross; and at the top of the black ribbon is an elaborate gold bar bearing what appears to be an inscription (which is indecipherable).

**This hasn't been solved yet!**  
If you've got any suggestions, contact the Editor.

## Vale, John Spencer continued

John also held many national appointments in St John, including Staff Officer to the Chief Commissioner from 1980 to 1984, and Chief Superintendent from 1986 to 1993. He was a member of the Priory Finance Committee for nearly 20 years, and he conducted audits and reviews of all St John state and territory entities

John planned and led St John's outstanding contribution to the Olympic and Paralympic games held in Sydney in 2000. This involved coordinating 1200 St John members from six countries, and volunteers from all Australian states and territories. St John was the only organisation to come out of the post-games debrief without criticism—a tribute to John's outstanding leadership skills.

John also contributed to the international St John organisation. In particular, he conducted a review of all aspects of the operations of St John Ambulance in Papua New Guinea. This review identified many recommendations for improvement, which have now been implemented and have led to St John PNG being a much better run organisation.

John's outstanding leadership in St John was recognised by his appointment in 2006 as a Bailiff Grand Cross of the Order of St John, one of the very few appointments at this grade.

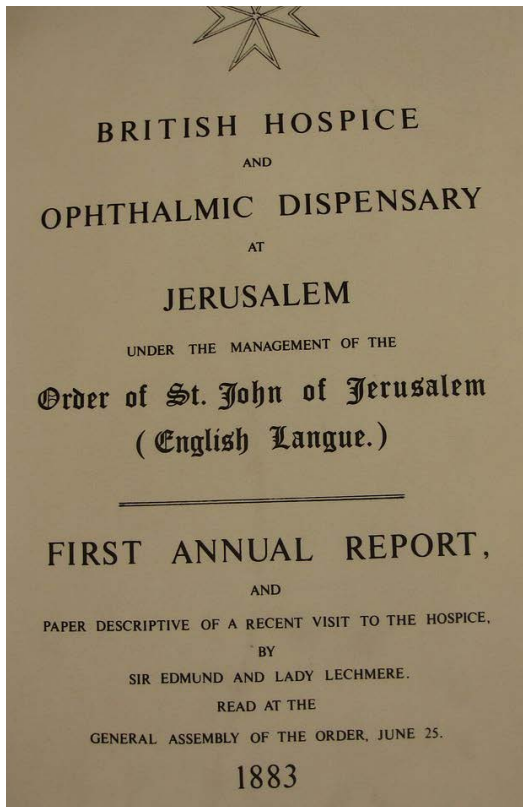
Earlier this year, John was presented with his Long Service Medal and three bars, in recognition of more than 65 years of service to St John Ambulance in Australia.

[Peter LeCornu](#)

## A Beacon of Hope – Update

*A Beacon of Hope. The 140th anniversary official history of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group*

In May 2019, the SJEH Group Trustees, with Sir Andrew Cash as their chair, commissioned Prof. John Pearn, Dr Ian Howie-Willis and Dr Matthew Glozier to produce a 140th anniversary official history of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group, in operation since 1882. Over the subsequent 18 months all three authors visited the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem and conducted research at St John's



## A Beacon of Hope - Update continued

Gate in London. Writing furiously throughout the pandemic lockdown in 2020, they produced between them a complete first draft of the book, consisting of 20 chapters and 5 substantial appendices on more than 500 pages.

By the start of 2021, *A Beacon of Hope* was marching steadily towards its publication deadline of early-2022. The SJEHG Trustees' history project steering group have expressed great appreciation for the product we've been sharing with them. In February the authors spent some days making the 301 separate amendments which Dr David Verity, the Order's Hospitaller, suggested. His medical ophthalmic expertise and substantial editorial experience meant we accepted his amendments without demur, because his suggestions materially enriched our draft text.

In the words of Ian Howie-Willis: 'David was also able to suggest some useful additions as well. For example, what I hadn't known is that the Sacred Infirmary of the Knights of St John in Valletta survived until 1918. When the French took over Malta in 1798, they retained the Infirmary as their hospital, and so did the Brits when they took over in 1800. The Infirmary then became the 'Station Hospital' for the British colonial regime on Malta, and continued serving that function until the end of World War I. Among others, Australians, Kiwis and Brits injured on Gallipoli in 1915 were sent there to convalesce. Absolutely amazing when you think of it—a hospital with a 350-year history. There's a wonderful PhD project for some aspiring military-medical historian!'

On David's advice Ian also added a reference to the Biblical story of Tobit, who was blinded by fresh sparrow droppings when he slept beneath a wall on which sparrows were roosting. His sight was eventually restored through the intervention of the Archangel Raphael, who instructed Tobit's son, Tobias, to rub the contents of the gall bladder of a fish into his father's eyes. David Verity opines that Tobit suffered a massive attack of acute bacterial conjunctivitis, and that the alkali in the fish gall cleansed his eyes, neutralising the acid of the sparrow poo. Whatever the nature of the blindness, the healing of Tobit is the first Biblical account of the restoration of sight after a massive bacterial or viral infection. With Jesus's six miracles of restoring the sight of the blind in the Gospels (which I did include), the Tobit story serves as an appropriate prefatory tale for our book. Sight-saving has a long history in Jerusalem!

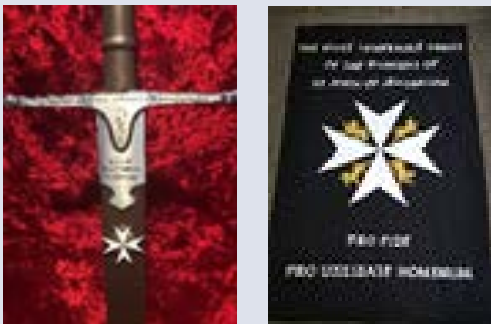
Now, all that is needed to complete the SJEHG official history is for the authorial team to receive a final set of suggestions, observations and editorial requests from the Trustees. This process is being coordinated by Mr Guy Morton, who has promised to supply the information at the start of March. That leaves plenty of time to make corrections, contemplate changes and integrate suggestions that will materially strengthen the final product. *A Beacon of Hope* has already taken on the dimensions of one of the most important heritage projects in the history of our Order. We three authors very much hope it will also provide momentum to encourage the Order to contemplate its next great endeavour: an authorised official history of the Order of St John for its bicentennial year of 2031.

Matthew Glozier

## Making history

John Pearn has brought to our attention that at the [St John Ambulance Queensland annual church service](#) held on 14 February 2021, the new Order of St John Ceremonial Sword (Qld) was blessed.

Also on display for the first time was the magnificent embroidered banner, presented by Vincent Little, a long-standing leader of St John Ambulance in Queensland and an authority on first aid literature.



Also making some quiet history, the [ACT Investiture](#) on 19 February, 2021 was the first Investiture that I have attended in 35 years of association with St John where all the postulants were women. This may not be a first, but odds are that it is. [Has this happened before in Australia?](#)



Making some international history, the [Priory of England](#) has recently recruited a record-breaking 30,500 volunteers to help with the vaccination program in the UK. Our very best wishes to all those volunteers.

## Numismatics

In *Pro Utilitate* No. 2021, issue 1, we pictured a mysterious bronze St John medal from New Zealand, which we asked readers to identify for [Todd Skilton, Order Librarian](#). The medal displays the badge of the Order and the two mottoes, *Pro Fide* and *Pro Utilitate* Hominum. On the reverse is this inscription: 'Sergt R. Barron — 1939'.



[Terry Walton](#), the Historical Society's UK representative on our management committee, and veteran guide, immediately recognised the medal. Here's what Terry wrote:

For very many years First Aid Competitions were conducted from the Divisional level up to the International level. I would suggest that the 'medal' was locally produced as a prize for such contests. In the Museum at St John's Gate there are many specimens of this award, most of which would be attached to a watch-chain. The medal is accordingly best described as a 'watch-chain fob'.

All the fobs I have seen at the Gate Museum (and there are between 50 and 60), were made locally. There were numerous styles in England then, the most impressive fobs produced by the Railway Companies. Others were made for use at a District and Divisional level and are often plain bronze.

The inscriptions varied widely. The inscription on the NZ fob is the only one I have seen with the Order motto. As far as I can recall, at no time were watch-chain fobs produced by the then St John Supplies Department (at the Gate). The winners of competitions would receive a shield or cup to retain until the next completion, but the fob would be presented as a perpetual reminder of winning the completion.

Although Nursing Divisions also held competitions both First Aid and Nursing, I have not come across prizes that can be positively identified for the women. Can anyone enlighten me?

Thanks, Terry, for clearing up that particular numismatic mystery! And if anybody does know of prizes specifically produced to honour our female first aiders, please write in.

Editor

## History from Tasmania: A very special ledger

Thank you, [Phillip Blackwell](#), for this article on [A Very Special Ledger](#).

This rather tatty looking black ledger may appear to be of no great value: its cover is worn, the spine cracked and the pages are starting to come away. However, it represents the earliest record of St John's involvement in Tasmania. In particular, the formation of the Launceston Sub-Centre in 1887. The first seeds of our presence in Tasmania were sown in January 1887 with the printing of the following letter in the *Launceston Examiner* on 15 January 1887:

### **St John Ambulance Association**

Sir,—In a leading article, which appeared in your issue of 22nd ultimo, you referred to the good work done among the employees on the Victorian railways by the St John Ambulance Association in instructing them in the first aid to be rendered to the injured. Tasmania, with its large, mining industries and outlying stations, usually far from medical assistance, and where a knowledge or otherwise of the methods of rendering help to sick and wounded often means recovery or death should not be behind the sister colony, more especially as war clouds are still on the horizon, and should a fringe of the threatened storm reach our unprotected shores, a well-trained ambulance corps would be an untold blessing. Many ladies in Launceston already possess the second, or nursing certificates of the society, and were classes formed many more would, I know, come forward, and thus be enabled to render valuable assistance in the sick room, and possibly in the hospital ward. The objects of the association need, I am sure, only to be brought forward at a public meeting for the matter to be warmly taken up, and sufficient members obtained to form a sub-centre.

Yours, etc, Semper Paratus

On 29 March 1887 the following letter to the editor appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston):

To the Editor

Sir,— you may possibly have noticed an advertisement by which I have called a meeting of those interested in forming a branch of the St John Ambulance Association — a society which, I believe, is widely spread in England. Its objects are by lectures given by medical men, to instruct men and women in the proper mode of dealing with persons suffering from accidents, when surgical assistance cannot immediately be obtained. It was first formed, I believe, in connection with armies in the field, but it may be most useful even in times of peace. Limbs are occasionally broken, arteries cut, and the bystanders are quite ignorant of what to do, and lives are lost, or at least great suffering occasioned in consequence of that ignorance. In Adelaide, I am informed that large numbers of men, as well as women, navvies, and others have joined the movement and received valuable instruction. This movement is the outcome of a conversation my daughter had



## A very special ledger continued

with the wife of the Bishop of Ballarat a few weeks ago; and as it will belong to no sect or party; I hope that it will be supported by all classes of the community.

Yours, etc, F. Hales.

Obviously, enough interest had been garnered to allow the initial meeting to be held to discuss the forming of a sub-centre as detailed in the newspaper article printed in the *Daily Telegraph* (Launceston) on 31 Mar 1887:

### **Ambulance Association**

A meeting of those desirous of forming classes in connection with the Ambulance Association in Victoria was held in the Collegiate Institute last evening, when the Ven. Archdeacon Hales occupied the chair. There was a very good number of ladies and gentlemen present, including Drs. Gutteridge and Hallows and the Rev. W. Law.

The chairman briefly put before the meeting the objects of an Ambulance Association, and pointed out the necessity of having such a body in Launceston, after which the following resolutions were proposed and carried:

Proposed by the Rev W. Law, and seconded by Dr Gutteridge - 'That a branch of the St John's Ambulance Association be now formed.'

Proposed by Mr H. Edgell, and seconded by Mr G. C. Gilmore - 'That the medical men practising in Launceston be requested to become honorary members, and to deliver courses of lectures as arranged by the committee.'

Proposed by Dr. Hallows, and seconded by Mr W. Barnes - 'That the following form the management of the Launceston sub-centre : President, His Excellency Sir B. Hamilton, lady patroness Lady Hamilton ; vice-presidents, the Venerable Archdeacon Hales, His Worship the Mayor (Mr R. Carter), the Very Rev Dean Beechinor, Rev W. Law, and Mr G. T. Collins: treasurer, Mr H. Edgell; secretaries, Miss K. Hales and Mr G. C. Gilmore.'

Proposed by Mr W. Barnes, and seconded by Mr H. Edgell - 'That the Melbourne Association be requested to adopt this association, to be called the Launceston sub-centre of St John's Ambulance Association.'

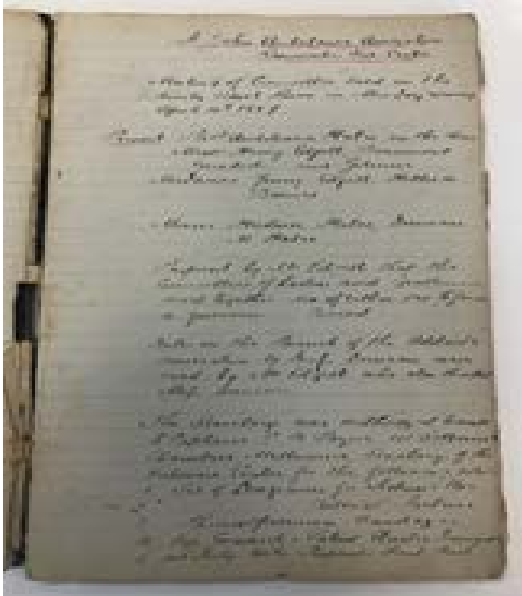
Proposed by Mr Edgell, and seconded by Dr. Gutteridge 'That the following form a gentleman's committee : Messrs. W. Barnes, A. Evershed, W. F. Wathen, H. Button, and J. Beaumont; also, that they have power to add to their number, three forming a quorum.'

Proposed by Dr. Hallows and seconded by Mr Evershed - 'That the ladies committee consist of Mesdames Barnes, Hellicar, Young, Edgell; Misses Duncan, Hales, Hudson; and that they also have power to add to their number, three forming a quorum.'

Close upon 40 members were enrolled last evening, and the committees were requested to meet on Monday evening next, in the same building, for the transaction of further business.

That this beginning is to be commended, nobody will deny. Wherever the St John's Ambulance Society has been given a footing, it has always found favour. The lamentable ignorance of the simplest remedies in cases of accident is already only too evident, but the want of practical knowledge is widely recognised, and the society is likely to flourish here as well as elsewhere. Its usefulness when once it





A page from the Minutes of the first official meeting of the St John Ambulance Association Launceston Sub-Centre, 4 April 1887.

### A very special ledger continued

is established, and the classes have acquired even a primary knowledge of the treatment of simple accidents, is so self-evident that its advantages will at once be recognised, and many a sufferer will be saved hours of pain by the use of simple common sense prior to the sufferer's arrival. In a new colony, where doctors are at a distance such knowledge as is obtained in these classes is doubly useful, and its importance cannot be overrated. Certainly, the present branch is limited to Launceston but the country township and districts will soon follow suit and reap corresponding advantages advantage.

The St John Ambulance Association Launceston Sub-Centre held its first official meeting on Monday 4 April 1887 in the Trinity School Room.

Philip Blackwell

## Behind the scenes in the Museum: Victoria

One of our members recently bought an eight-page document on eBay and gave it to the Museum. It has opened up a whole new vista of our history. Before I tell you what it was, I'll make a preliminary comment.

St John Ambulance Association in Melbourne began its teaching from 1883. Its managing committee was preoccupied by first aid class administration and, subsequently, by running the ambulance service. Although they were aware of the founding of St John Ambulance Brigade in Britain and in other places, including Sydney, they had no great desire to follow suit. It was only in 1908, 25 years later, with the official visit of Theodore Roosevelt's 'Great White Fleet' that the need for organised first aid at public events prompted the formation of the First Aid Volunteer's Association, which morphed into the St John Ambulance Brigade in Victoria in 1910.

Although the St John Ambulance Association committee reported its decision to commence the Brigade, there was no further mention of the Brigade in its annual reports for the next 40 years. In the meantime, volunteer first aiders at public events had become the public relations face of the organisation. It was only with a constitutional revision in the late 1950s that the Brigade was given equal billing in the new St John Council and space in the annual reports. Shortly afterwards, the *White Cross* magazine became a readily accessible source of information about Brigade activities.

The gifted item was a copy of *Victorian First Aid and St John Ambulance Gazette*, Volume 1, Number 6, dated 7 September 1918. It was edited by Dr George Horne, the member of St John Ambulance committee who had been appointed the first Brigade



## Behind the scenes in the Museum continued

Commissioner in Victoria. It had an editorial page, articles on ‘Observations of First Aid work’, ‘A Victorian VAD in France’, and Association and Brigade notices.

From within the 40 years of apparent silence, this is the first item we have received to show that the Brigade was operating then much as we do today. Another tiny piece of the archival mosaic.

Allan Mawdsley, St John Museum (Victoria)

## Book review

### *Defending the City of God*

Sharan Newman. St Martin’s Press, MacMillan Publishers, 2014, ISBN 978 113 74378 39

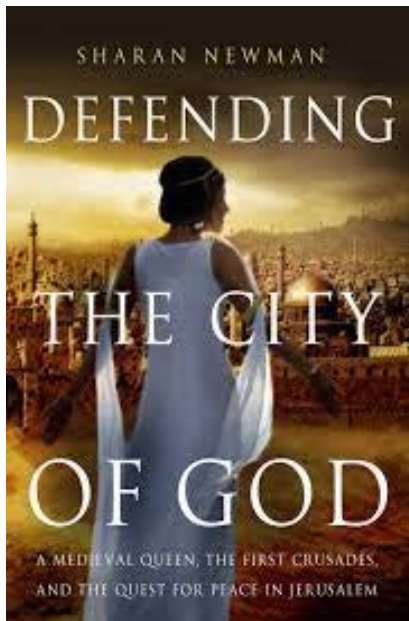
This is another one of the many recent books of the medieval period in the Levant which focuses on the women who played a significant part in this history. As more and more women find their place among the historians of this period, so we are finding more and more authoritative works elaborating their contributions. Sharan Newman is from Oregon USA and is a medieval historian and award-winning author of both fiction and non-fiction. She also gained a master’s in medieval literature in 1973 from Michigan State University and then doctoral work in medieval studies at the University of California. Newman currently lectures widely in medieval history.

The book ranges from 1105 to 1161 to cover the period of Queen Melisende’s life, and attempts to fill in some of the circumstances of her coming to, and holding onto the throne. Melisende was born in the Levant and the first to inherit the throne of Jerusalem by succession. Prior to that the rulers had been elected by the nobles present—much as a president might these days. She was not the last woman to rule in the fledgling Kingdom of Jerusalem but she certainly was one of the longest to reign.

The book is very readable but authoritative with detailed reference notes included for each chapter. There is a sizeable list of primary and secondary sources, and she acknowledges a team of historians who were helpful to her including Karen Nichols and Helen Nicholson who are two of the more recent female historians writing on the role of women in Medieval times.

In reality, very little was recorded of women at this time, and although the aristocratic women fared better, this also applies to the background and details about Melisende. Although the subtitle for this book is ‘A Medieval Queen, the First Crusades, and the Quest for Peace in Jerusalem’, quite possibly the least amount of detail in the book is about Queen Melisende. However, having said that, there is enough to piece together as much as is known, of this remarkable woman. Another qualifying comment is that Newman’s interest is less in the Hospitallers and much more in the Templars and so they feature much more prominently within the book.

It is not until Chapter 9, page 95, that we get to a point where Melisende is being prepared to rule. Those first eight chapters cover the intrigues and conflicts within and without the Crusader kingdoms. It also includes the betrothal of Melisende’s



## A question of history

This Esmarch bandage was donated by Maggie Smith an attendee at a recent University of the Third Age lecture on 'The Hospitaller Order' in the Southern Highlands.



This original bandage came from the farm of Frances Austen Smith, 'Glenroy' near Wallendbeen, Young in NSW. Frances Smith was in the Light Horse Brigade in World War II and set up his farm in 1947.

Unfortunately, he died young and his son, Frances John Smith, took over the farm aged 15 years. Maggie Smith married Frances John and went to live with him on 'Glenroy' in 1968; she remembers the sling being there when she arrived. There is some question as to whether Frances Smith (the senior) might have acquired the sling during his time in war.

David Fahey's published article on this bandage's 'inventor' Fredrich von Esmarch, appears in [St John History](#), Volume 13, page 5. The bandage was popularised by von Esmarch in 1869 who promoted it as having 32 applications.

**The question of history is: does anyone have in their possession or museum, a version of this bandage that predates 1968, or is possibly of World War II origin? This Editor would love to read about the story behind your Esmarch bandage!**

## Book review continued

mother, Morfia, to the new prince of Antioch, Bohemond, in a trade for military aid! Melisende's maternal grandfather was an Armenian wheeler-and-dealer and also referred to as a fairly unscrupulous warlord. Bohemond came to the throne (as Baldwin II) of Jerusalem seemingly by being at the right place at the right time.

The next five Chapters (10–14) chronicle the rocky relationship between Melisende and Fulk of Anjou who was arranged to be her 'king'. Despite Bohemond making it clear that Melisende and Fulk were to rule jointly, it appeared that Fulk had very different ideas. There is a lot known about Fulk and his ambitions for power and a lot of this has been included as background. Initially, Baldwin relied on Fulk for his military prowess but his successes were not as great as his ambitions. He could not retake Damascus in 1129 and this left the crusader states demoralised. According to Baldwin's wishes, Melisende and Fulk were anointed as joint rulers of the Kingdom of Jerusalem in 1131. It is interesting that a Muslim chronicler at the time, commented that the 'new Count-King ... was not sound in his judgement, nor was he successful in his administration'—this is what Melisende had to contend with.

Although difficult to control as a co-ruler, Melisende finally managed to do so after Fulk sought revenge on Melisende's cousin, Hugh of Jaffa, and was rumoured to have orchestrated an attack on him. Newman writes, 'She had been quiet long enough. Now she came roaring out like a lion. She took control of the court, and anyone who had sided with Fulk now met the queen's 'displeasure'.

The period of relative calm gave Melisende and Fulk the chance to direct a number of major building projects, including fortresses for the military orders; the Krak de Chevaliers is an example. These projects also included churches and monasteries protected by towers. Melisende had already built a solid market, but she had the streets rebuilt and covered after Fulk's death in a hunting accident in 1143.

Chapters 15–17 tell the final period of Melisende rule: first on her own from 1143–1149, and then in a power tussle with Baldwin III. During Melisende's time Edessa was lost to the Christians which

## Book review continued

resulted in the second crusade, the first to be led by a reigning monarch, Louis VII with his wife, Eleanore of Aquitaine. It is interesting to note, that despite being queen in her own right and a successful one at that, Melisende is described by even 20th century historians as ‘power-hungry Queen Dowager’ and ‘an authoritarian, even vindictive woman’. Even while admitting that the career of her son Baldwin (III) had been a series of defeats, historians saw her as a woman who plotted to keep her son from power.

This is an incredible story of a woman who had to ransom her father Baldwin (II) in order to secure her own future; fight her husband for the right to rule; hold together a fragile kingdom from internal politics; keep the Ottomans at bay, and then wrestle for power with her son Baldwin III. She ruled for a significant period (1131–1160) establishing a period of stability which allowed for major building projects. William of Tyre, in epitaph said ‘for thirty years or more, during the lifetime of her husband, as well as afterwards, in the reign of her son, Melisende had governed the kingdom with strength surpassing that of most women. Her rule had been wise and judicious’.

Elizabeth Ellis, Book review editor



## What is history? How do you become a historian?

Ian Howie-Willis contributes the following item as the 14th episode in our ‘What is History?’ series. This time he considers the question, ‘How do you become a historian?’

There is no single, fixed route to becoming a historian. For academic historians—the elite of the profession; those on the staff of a History Department at a university—the usual route is a four-year honours undergraduate degree in History: commonly a Bachelor of Arts (BA), followed by a postgraduate degree in History, typically a Master of Arts (MA) and/or Doctor of Philosophy (PhD). The postgraduate degree is earned through further coursework and the supervised writing of a thesis on an approved topic. The thesis must be based on independent research, using a range of sources: primary (archival materials), secondary (published material), and oral (commonly interviews with key players). The MA thesis is customarily 50,000 words long and is usually completed after a minimum of a year’s equivalent full-time study. The PhD thesis is somewhat more demanding, usually 100,000 words and completed after three years’ full-time research and writing. The PhD is also expected to make an original and unique contribution to human knowledge. The historian emerging from such training will have undergone up to eight years of full-time university education; and they will have been very thoroughly trained. Historians who travel that route regard themselves as professional practising historians. Having gained their postgraduate degree, many go on to publish books of history, the first of which is often a revised and rewritten version of the thesis. Not all do, however, and many are content to practise history by teaching it at the senior secondary and university levels.

Some Historical Society members have had such training; however, the truth is that you don’t need to do it to become a successfully published historian. The ranks of our Historical Society are replete with the names of accomplished practising historians

## One last word on the TARDIS – Dating the TARDIS

When ‘Dr Who’ first appeared on our TV screens over here in London I was a Constable in the Metropolitan Special Constabulary (volunteer police). On the door of the police box was an enamelled sign, reading ‘St John Ambulance Association – First Aid’—this police box housed an SJA Association First Aid Kit.

At that time (1963) all constables and sergeants had to be qualified First Aiders as they were required to crew ambulances and render assistance at accidents—well before the current National Health Service ambulance was set up.

The First Aid kits were purchased from the then St John Ambulance Association Stores Department at St John’s Gate. This department was opened on 15 May 1879 under the direction of John Furley.

The supplies in the kits were fairly basic: triangular bandages, sterile dressings, wooden splints, tourniquet and Sal volatile.

These kits were kept just inside the police box under a shelf. A telephone was mounted inside, behind the hinged door so that it accessible from inside the box and outside so that a member of the public could pick up the handset and speak directly to the local police station. There was also a shelf and stool so the police officer could sit and write their reports in their pocketbook.

As time went by, the BBC TARDIS became worn out and a new one was built. This, however, proved a problem—the St John Ambulance ‘Association’ no longer existed, and the enamelled signs were no longer made. In fact the remaining signs were sold off by Supplies as bygones.

Now, TARDIS boxes only have a sticky transfer with ‘St John

## What is history? continued

who didn’t tread the MA/PhD path. Although they didn’t follow the academic route into historiography, they do share certain important and necessary qualities in common with those who were academically trained. They all:

- ✓ possess a ‘historical imagination’; that is, they think about the past, try to visualise what it was like, and are fascinated by past events and personalities;
- ✓ are inquisitive; they have a curiosity about the past, and continually ask questions about it;
- ✓ study the past; they read books and articles about history, watch movies and TV programs, go delving through old records and artefacts that help them understand the past better;
- ✓ undertake their own investigations into historical topics that have caught their interest. They don’t wait for someone else to research and write about such matters, but independently make their own inquiries, using books, newspaper and journal articles, archival records, interviews and letters as they seek further information;
- ✓ like visiting museums, libraries and archival repositories where they will find their source material and discover what other historians have written on the topics they’re interested in;
- ✓ are rigorous in their scholarship, always seeking to sort out the fact from the fiction;
- ✓ master the craft of historical writing by learning how to communicate their historical findings concisely and expressively in well-constructed, easily understood prose; and, on top of all that, they ...
- ✓ wish to share their interest in the past with others: talking about it, writing about it, discussing it with other similarly interested people, making presentations on the results of their research, and publishing what they have written.

Regardless of the trade or profession they practise to pay the rent, most historians probably also share a sense of vocation in being historians. Eventually they begin to realise that ‘capital-H history’ is a way of life to which they’ve been called—as if by some higher power. They come to appreciate that they’ve been blessed with a special gift for reflecting on the past and interpreting it to others. Among the greatest

### Dating the TARDIS continued

Ambulance’—not as impressive as the original sign. So, look out for the original TARDIS with the enamelled SJA Association sign.

Terry Walton, UK



The TARDIS teapot, a favourite piece in the Australian Priory's historical collection!

### What is history? continued

successes of our Historical Society is that it has provided its historians with an opportunity to develop their historian's skills and to practise the historian's craft.

They're in good company, because some of the very best Australian historians never studied history at university. One who comes readily to mind is Dr Allan S Walker (1887–1958), a physician-soldier who was the official Australian medical historian for World War II. He saw active service with the Australian Army Medical Corps in both World Wars I and II. He ended the latter as a colonel and the consulting physician at the Allied Army Headquarters.

In 1945 Colonel Walker became a full-time historian when he was commissioned to research and write the four medical volumes in the 18-volume official Australian war history series. He spent the rest of his life working on them. They were: *Clinical Problems of War* (1952), *Middle East and Far East* (1953), *The Island Campaigns* (1957) and *Medical Services of the RAN and RAAF* (1961, published posthumously; [AWM](#)).

Allan Walker learned his historian's skills quickly and 'on the job'. His only previous writing experience had been producing several medical-historical articles for *The Medical Journal of Australia*. On being appointed as a war historian, he undertook vast historical research among the archival records of the Australian War Memorial. He then got down to the task of writing his books. All four of them are classics, and, almost 70 years after the first was published, they're still indispensable reference works for anyone wanting to know about the medical aspects of World War II.

Dr Walker didn't need a BA, MA or PhD in history to become one of Australia's most eminent historians. Nor should you if you decide that you have the historian's vocation!

Ian Howie-Willis



This is the only known photo of Dr Walker. It shows him working on the archival files with an assistant during the early 1950s.

## Every St John home should have one!

Exactly what should every St John home have? A St John Ambulance Australia first aid kit, naturally, and also the latest edition of *Australian First Aid*.



But let’s not forget the **Australian Priory wall plaque**.

The Australian Office of St John Ambulance Australia has just taken delivery of a new consignment of ‘Priory in Australia’ wall plaques. As you can see by the illustration, the plaque is a most handsome object.

*Pro Utilitate* is proud that the plaques are an exclusive Historical Society product, first produced 13 years ago to raise funds for the Society. Sales profits help defray Society expenses, which include distributing *Pro Utilitate*, production of the annual journal, *St John History*, and expenses associated with the annual Historical Society Seminar. As well as raising money for the Historical Society,

the plaques are a great way of promoting the Priory—which is something we St John history enthusiasts are always eager to do.

The plaques measure 17.7 cm long and 15 cm wide, in the shape of a shield. The shield itself is of a highly polished mahogany-coloured wood. The central feature is the Priory Arms in crimson, white, blue and gold-enamelled metal, with ‘Priory in Australia’ and ‘The Most Venerable Order of St John’ inscribed on gold scrolls above and below the Arms, respectively.

If you would like to own a ‘Priory in Australia’ wall plaque either for your own use, or as a gift for a St John friend or relative, simply complete the Order Form below. Alternatively, you can contact the Australian Office in Canberra, at the details below.

### Australian Priory wall plaque - Order form



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St John Ambulance Australia Ltd, PO Box 292, Deakin West ACT 2600

**T** 02 6209 9201    **E** enquiries@stjohn.org.au

## Renewals for 2021

As we're now half-way through 2021, you'll be a non-financial member if you haven't already renewed your [Historical Society membership subscription](#). As a paid-up member, you receive 4 issues of *Pro Utilitate*, a copy of *St John history*, and, not to mention, access to a wealth of information on the ancient and modern history of our international organisation.

You can download the [membership application/renewal form](#) from the national website: [stjohn.org.au/about](http://stjohn.org.au/about) (scroll down to 'History').

If you renew a month before St John's Day (that is, [by 24 May](#)), you won't be culled from the membership database!

## And finally ...

After discussions with the Australian Office, the decision has been taken that *Pro Utilitate* will be sent out electronically. It will also be hosted in the History section on the national website for downloading, printing, and for access to the wider St John membership. If any individual is not in a position to receive this electronically, please contact Gabrielle Lhuede (02 6239 9209).

That's it for this year's second edition of *Pro Utilitate*, dear reader. We hope you like the new 'look'. The next issue (number 3) will be out in August. Any feedback on this issue is welcome. Potential articles or ideas for forthcoming publication are invited, especially from our youth members and budding 'historians'.

You're warmly invited to email me as editor.

Until then ... more next issue.

**Elizabeth Ellis**

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The final resting place of a most remarkable Melbournian is unmarked and unrecognised.

*Dr James Edward Neild*  
The Founding Father of St John Ambulance in Australia



Please donate to help with the restoration of Neild's grave site in the Old Melbourne Cemetery.

Contributions can be made to the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia.

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Please email a confirmation of your donation to Robert De Vere (SJAHS Treasurer): [devon52@optusnet.com.au](mailto:devon52@optusnet.com.au)

Dr Allan Mawdsley OAM KStJ, Immediate-Past President, SJAHS