



25th Annual History Seminar

Realm Hotel, Canberra
Saturday 11 November 2023

Your day

9.00 am Welcome and introduction – David Fahey, President

SESSION 1 — CHAIR, DAVID FAHEY

9.10 am My lived experience of history. **Invited speaker:** Brendan Wood

9.30 am 'Mar Hanna'. Ian Howie-Willis

9.50 am Emphasising the positives. Neil Conn

10.10 am The Volunteer Aid Detachment. Trevor Mayhew

10.30 am Morning tea

SESSION 2 — CHAIR, JAMES CHESHIRE

11:00 am The history of the tourniquet. David Fahey

11.20 am 'A Royal Founding'. Matthew Glozier

11.40 am Myths and legends. Elizabeth Ellis

12.00 pm Luncheon

SESSION 3 — CHAIR, MATTHEW GLOZIER

1.00 pm A figure of speech. John Pearn

1.20 pm Rhodes to Malta. Bruce Caslake

1.40 pm In search of the Priory stones. Pam Heiermann

2.00 pm QUESTION TIME

2.20 pm Afternoon tea

SESSION 4 — CHAIR, ELIZABETH ELLIS

3.00 pm History. In our past, for our future. **Invited speaker:** Matt Anderson

3.45 pm QUESTION TIME

4:00 pm Close and thank you for attending!

It would be appreciated if you would please resume your seat 5 minutes before each session.

Thank you!

SESSION 1 CHAIR, DAVID FAHEY

[9.10 am] *My lived experience of history. A reflection of Lieutenant Colonel C.E. Thomas, NZMC and historical connection to contemporary New Zealand.* **Brendan Wood**, Deputy Chair, St John Ambulance New Zealand

As a St John Ambulance Cadet in Timaru, New Zealand, I vividly recall entering the training hall and noting the bronze plaque above the doorway which read, 'Lieut-Col C.E. Thomas, NZMC, and the Dardanelles'. At the time, the significance of this memorial plaque eluded me; only later did I grasp the profound role that men like LTCOL Thomas played in shaping the early fabric of New Zealand society. Affectionately known as the 'Little Doctor', LTCOL C.E. Thomas was a beloved figure in Timaru, New Zealand. Born in Bangalore, India, in 1864, he earned his medical qualifications, and at age 25 he settled in Timaru. He served as Chief Medical Officer at Klerksdorp during the Anglo-Boer War, and held positions as a Resident Surgeon at Timaru Hospital, a St John Ambulance Medical Officer, and an honorary surgeon of the Timaru Fire Brigade. Posted to a New Zealand Mounted Field Ambulance, LTCOL Thomas found himself in one of the most perilous positions on the ANZAC-Suvla front in 1915. During an intense shelling, when seeking shelter in a trench, a shell exploded directly above him, claiming his life instantaneously (Tobin 2001).

This reflection will explore the life of Dr Thomas and his fellow officers who travelled from the place of my birth and their connections to contemporary New Zealand.

Tobin C (2001). *Gone to Gallipoli: Anzacs of small town New Zealand go to war*. Bosco Press, Timaru, NZ.

[9.30 am] *'Mar Hanna' — the church that gave its name to the Orders of St John.* **Ian Howie-Willis**

'Mar Hanna' means 'St John' in the Syriac dialect of Aramaic, the native language of Jesus Christ. The expression has passed into Arabic; many Christian churches in Israel/Palestine, Syria, Lebanon and elsewhere are consequently called 'Mar Hanna'. The original 'Mar Hanna' was built in the period 450–460 AD in the Christian quarter of the Old City of Jerusalem, perhaps to house the skeletal remains of John the Baptist. After the nearby Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Mar Hanna is the second oldest of Jerusalem's many churches. It is now some 1,560 years old.

Architecturally, Mar Hanna conforms to the general pattern of Syriac Orthodox churches built under the Patriarchate of Antioch. Archaeologically, it has been excavated on various occasions over the past 150 years. Investigations in 2010–2011 have revealed that the church was constructed in stages across many centuries. The major redevelopment occurred during the 87-year period of ownership by the original Order of St John, 1100–1187 AD. During the Order's occupancy, its members adopted the name of the church as their own. In Latin, they became 'Ordo Fratrum Hospitalis Sancti Ioannis Hierosolymitani', i.e. 'Order of Brothers of the Hospital of Saint John of Jerusalem'. All modern Orders of St John maintain the humanitarian traditions of that hospital; and all have inherited the name of the Jerusalem church known as 'Mar Hanna'.

[9.50 am] *Emphasising the positive. Historic episodes in the 141-year history of the St John of Jerusalem Eye Hospital Group.* **Neil Conn**

The paper demonstrates how the St John Eye Hospital Group (SJEHG) has always managed to cope with the crises overtaking it. It has done so by 'emphasising the positive' — always seeking to make the best of its circumstances. This paper illustrates the point by citing six instances or examples from the SJEHG's history. These are as follows: (1) the Hospital's partial demolition during a Turkish Army attempt to blow it up in December 1917; (2) the conscious choice by Arab and Jewish male inpatients during the Arab revolt of 1936 to continue being accommodated together in the same ward; (3) the single-handed action of a young Palestinian eye surgeon, Dr Elias Doany, in keeping the Hospital open during the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948; (4) the use of Watson House in the Old City of Jerusalem as an interim Hospital 1948–1960 after the original Hospital had been lost during the first Arab-Israeli war; (5) the introduction during the 1990s of a mobile outreach van service and the establishment of three satellite Hospitals in the occupied Palestinian areas after Palestinians' access to the Hospital in Jerusalem was restricted; and (6) the opening in 2016 of the SJEHG's day clinic in the Muristan precinct within the Old City of Jerusalem, in the area once occupied by the original Order of St John.

[10.10 am] *Voluntary Aid Detachment. The Beginnings.* **Trevor Mayhew**

The Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) was a voluntary unit of civilians providing nursing care for military personnel in the United Kingdom and various other countries in the British Empire. The most important periods of operation for these units were during World War I and World War II. Although VADs were intimately bound up in the war effort, they were not military nurses, as they were not under the control of the military, unlike the Queen Alexandra's Royal Army Nursing Corps, the Princess Mary's Royal Air Force Nursing Service, and the Queen Alexandra's Royal Naval Nursing Service. The VAD nurses worked in field hospitals, i.e., close to the battlefield, and in longer-term places of recuperation back in Britain.

10.30 am Morning tea

SESSION 2 CHAIR, JAMES CHESHIRE

[11.00 am] *The history of the tourniquet.* **David Fahey**

The arterial tourniquet for haemorrhage control has its origins in antiquity, with evidence of its use dating from at least 200 BC. However, the subsequent anatomical teachings of Galen hindered understanding of haemorrhage control - Galen taught that blood was formed continuously in the liver. Blood letting became a popular medical intervention for a range of conditions including shock. The true function of the circulatory system as a closed circuit with a finite blood volume was not described until 1628 by William Harvey. Subsequently, surgeons began designing and using tourniquets, especially for use during limb amputations. Esmarch devised a system of 'bloodless surgery' using a rubber bandage and screw tourniquet. The use of tourniquets extended to the battlefield, but

their use was strongly criticised in both World War I and II; delayed evacuation of the wounded often resulted in prolonged application times and ischaemic limb damage. In subsequent military operations, faster casualty evacuations permitted a re-evaluation of pre-hospital tourniquet use. The first aid teachings in the St John manuals reflect these changing opinions. Our manual initially made no mention of tourniquets at all. It took until the 1990s for the euphemistic 'constrictive bandage' to be included.

[11.20 am] *A Royal Founding: How King George IV invented the insignia of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem.* **Matthew Glozier**

The Rev. Sir Robert Peat was the first Grand Prior of the revived English Langue of the Order of St John from 1831. This story begins with Peat because he was instrumental in transforming a royal fancy into a tangible historical reality. Peat joined the English Langue in 1830 at St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, in the presence of Philippe de Chastelain (representing the Commission of the French Langues, which had initiated the revival) and their Agent-General, Donald Currie. Though Sir Robert was an Anglican curate, he married a wealthy Catholic lady called Jane Smith, not for her fortune but because of her kinship with Maria Anne Fitzherbert, the long-time companion of George, Prince of Wales, later Prince Regent, then King George IV. As one of a hundred honorary chaplains to King George IV, Sir Robert was devoted to his royal patron, 'though he never met him. This helps explain Peat's attraction to the Order of St John, because he discovered King George was connected to it. King George's fascination was sustained until the Commission of the French Langues made him a knight of the Order. As a result, his Majesty designed uniquely British insignia for his personal wear. This paper examines that act of royal creation and its subsequent effect on the establishment, growth, and development of the Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem.

[11.40 am] *Myths and legends.* **Elizabeth Ellis**

The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem was gazetted by Queen Victoria in the 1888. The social, political and literal context of the Victorian era provide an interesting backdrop for the establishment of our Order and some insight into its structure and consequences.

The fascination with Medievalism particularly King Arthur, his knights and their chivalry, clearly echoed in the establishment of many of the Victorian Orders with their muscular Christianity, paternalism, and patriotic support for the Queen and Empire. This is manifest by uniforms, ranks, nomenclature, wearing of mantles, symbols such as the 8-pointed star of Amalfi used in the 12th Century, organisation into Priories with the Lord Prior and Grand Prior at the top just below the Sovereign.

The question, on reflection, is this the best mode to operate in the modern world as St John Ambulance world-wide. Are the Arthurian legends and chivalric values realistic and suitable for a humanitarian organisation today. And are the paternalistic values inherent in those legends suitable for an organisation with more women than men at

the coal face today. It could be argued that given that over 60 % of volunteers and paid employees are women, the fact that only 40% of the members of the Order are women, demonstrates that these traditions have not served the majority of those doing the work of the Order.

12.00 pm Luncheon

SESSION 3 CHAIR, MATTHEW GLOZIER

[1.00 pm] *A figure of speech. The DRSABCD initialism as an Aide-Memoir.*

John Pearn

The English language is enriched with more than 80 different figures of speech. Two of these figures are acronyms and initialisms. They fulfil many roles, including shorthand focused communications, semiotic messaging and aide mémoires. An acronym is a word composed of the initials of other words, itself a word discoverable in contemporary dictionaries. An initialism is a set of letters consisting of the initials of other words, but itself is not a word. In the First Aid domain, the initialism 'AB' was introduced by Dr Peter Safar, as an aide memoir for the initial steps of another initialism, 'CPR'. In 1960, 'C' was added and 'ABC' became the fundamental doctrine of managing unconscious casualties. In 1984, in the first edition of Australian First Aid, the 'D'(for Danger) was added to the extending initialism, as a practical teaching tool. The initialism continued to expand, reflecting refinement of pedagogic doctrine and 'RS' (for 'Check for Response' and 'Shout for Help') was added. Following the appreciation that timely defibrillation would increase the survival of heart attack victims from 12% to at least 50%, the full initialism, 'DRSABCD', is today the standard aide-mémoire. When a bystander is confronted with a sudden emergency, there is inevitable stress and uncertainty inherent in the inescapable need for decision-making and action. Even for experienced people, recourse to the DRSABCD initialism is of enormous help. The teaching of this initialism is perhaps the most significant message which is taught in every First Aid course.

[1.20 pm] *From Rhodes to Malta. Bruce Caslake*

The time in history is the early part of the 16th century. After the death of Philip the Fair in 1506 Maximilian, on behalf of Charles the V of Spain (Philip's son), is negotiating Charles' succession to become the rightful heir, and new Emperor of the Roman Empire. About 20 years on, the rulers of France are extremely concerned by the growing power of the Habsburg family in Europe and so are forced to look elsewhere for not only a trading partner but a country that would have the power to support them with military aid as well. Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire, once an enemy, now becomes an ally to France. After the fall of Rhodes, Charles V is fully aware of the capabilities of the Knights of St John. After the poor support of the European countries in Rhodes' time of need, it's possible that Charles wanted to make amends, but also needed a group of dedicated Knights that could help with his problem of France and the Ottomans combining into a formidable force.

How the Knights of St John regrouped and rebuilt their Order after their defeat in Rhodes, to finding their new home on Malta with the help of the Holy Roman Emperor, King Charles V of Spain, and Pope Clements VII, is the topic of my paper.

[1.40 pm] *In search of the Priory stones. Pam Heiermann*

A 1948 newspaper article led to a Tasmanian project to find the stones that came to Australia after the World War II bombing blitz caused immense destruction to the Grand Priory Church in Clerkenwell. Luckily the Crypt that lay beneath was not damaged and remains one of England's finest examples of Norman architecture.

I am a history enthusiast whose initial concern was 'Am I the only one who didn't know we had Priory Stones'. With Knights and Dames and other amazing historians from across Australia assisting and the Lord Prior recollections being called upon – the success in finding the Priory Stones over a five-month period far exceeded expectations. Fourteen Priory Stones have been identified and only the location for two remains unaccounted. For some of these Priory Stones, their existence had long been forgotten after their arrival in the 1940's; whilst others hold prominent place in St John museums or at National, State or Territory headquarters. The search for the physical location of the last two stones continues. While some Priory Stones are beautifully worked, others are less remarkable, but all of the stones have a spiritual link dating back to the 12th century or earlier. For three Priory Stones the sacred link continues with two placed in Cathedrals and one in an outdoor altar.

I invite you to come on the journey and learn about our Australian Priory stones – they are a tangible link to our history.

[2.00 pm] **Question time**

2.20 pm Afternoon tea

SESSION 4 CHAIR, ELIZABETH ELLIS

[3.00 pm] *History. In our past, for our future. Matt Anderson, CEO, Australian War Memorial*

[3.45 pm] **Question time**

[4.00 pm] **Close, and thank you for attending!**

