



Pro Utilitate

Preserving and promoting the St John heritage.

Newsletter of The St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia

Issue 2025/1

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From the Editor

2025 is another very historical year, being 100 years since the commencement of the Cadet movement here in Australia.

Throughout the year, this historic occasion will be celebrated with events at local, state, territory, and national levels. For more information, visit the St John Youth website at youth.stjohn.org.au.

With the founding of the Glebe Ambulance Cadet Division in New South Wales on 9 December 1925, the Cadets/ Youth have proudly served the community. Guided by our core aims of empowering youth in first aid, community engagement, and service, and rooted in our values of commitment, competence, compassion, and confidence, countless lives have been enriched over the past century.

For 100 years, the St John Youth Program has engaged young Australians (aged 8 to 25 years) in skill building, leadership development, and community volunteering. A recent impact study demonstrated that the program has significant positive benefits in terms of self-esteem, resilience and commitment to service. Furthermore, the Youth Program is fostering the next generation of healthcare workers—connecting young people with pathways for further education and careers.

As part of the Centenary of Youth celebrations, the Youth program will launch the St John Ambulance Oral History Project in June on the Youth website: youth.stjohn.org.au. This digital exhibition captures the voices and stories of past and present members, preserving their experiences, achievements, and the impact of the program on their lives. Through recorded interviews and shared memories, the project highlights the rich legacy of the cadet/ youth program and ensures that the contributions of generations of cadets are honored and remembered for years to come.

There has also been a special edition of the *Youth Handbook* published to provide the knowledge and inspiration for young people to continue our proud



tradition. It includes a historic youth timeline of the past 100 years, as well as seven discrete sections supporting a young person's development path through St John. This book can be ordered through St John Australia Office or make contact through the website above. Other merchandise can be ordered through <https://www.stjohnambulance.theprintbar.com/> for your children or grandchildren.

Elizabeth Ellis and Gab Lhuede



President's Message

Membership update

A complete overhaul of our membership database is currently underway—we are grateful for the assistance of Gab Lhuede and the Australian Office, who is undertaking to contact each listed person. Hopefully this will result in a boost in financial members. We will be able to provide a more detailed update at the AGM on 24 June.

This work is occurring in parallel with the implementation of an entirely new platform for the member database—again with thanks to the AO. Thanks also go to Bob Devere for keeping our records such that the above work is now possible.

Undertaking this work has inevitably led us to ask 'what does it mean to be a financial member'? In order for the annual subscription to be seen as value for money, it has been decided that:

- Only financial members will receive a print copy of our journal *St John History* (with a few exceptions such as Honorary Life Members). There will be a 12 month delay in putting the journal online. No print copies will be distributed at the seminar.
- Only financial members will be emailed a copy of *Pro Utilitate*.
- Only financial members will receive a discount on the fee for attending the annual seminar.
- Only financial members may vote at the Annual General Meeting.

An option for a one-time perpetual membership fee (similar in structure to that now used for Order members) is supported by the Executive, and will be tabled at the AGM for endorsement by the membership. Hopefully this will assist members by avoiding the hassle of annual or five-yearly payments.

Best wishes

Dr David Fahey

(on behalf of the Historical Society Executive)

Awards and recognition

Mrs Valmai Lorraine Dempsey DStJ — Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the General Division

For service to community health. St John Ambulance ACT for her work as a volunteer, since c. 1970 through coordinating the Volunteer Response, 2019–2020 'Black Summer' Bushfires, NSW/ACT, 2020. She has been in the past a Senior Nurse and an advocate for the Learner Driver First Aid Program. She was also President of the Myositis Association Australia and the Canberra Lung Life Support Group. Awards and Recognition includes: Dame of Grace, The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem, since 2024, Senior Australian of the Year, and ACT Senior Australian of the Year, National Australia Day Council, 2022, National Emergency Medal, Bushfires 2019–2020.



Awards and Honours continued

Distinguished and Conspicuous Service Decorations

The Governor-General is pleased to announce the following Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) to **Colonel Peter George WARFE (Retd)** For distinguished command and leadership in warlike operations as the Commander, Australian Contingent to the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda from February to August 1995. Colonel Warfe's leadership as the Commander Australian Contingent of the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Rwanda was remarkable. His leadership qualities

ensured a high level of medical service was achieved despite at times hostile conditions. He was instrumental in the planning, formation, and implementation of a new United Nations Mandate for Rwanda and liaising with the Rwandan Government to ensure the success of the new Mandate. Peter Warfe DSC KStJ served on the Board of St John Australia as Director of Training, Chair of the Medical Advisory Panel, and is a Knight in the Order. Congratulations Peter.

Congratulations to all our members who were recognised in the 2024 lists which can be viewed in full, here: https://members.stjohn.org.au/docs/2024%20A_P%20List_signed.pdf

COMING EVENTS

Webinars 2025

Our next two Webinars in 2025 are designed to help members prepare and present papers at conferences, and preparing a paper for publication. We are hoping that these could also help Cadets/Youth and members develop the skills for success.

Presenting your conference paper

Tuesday 29 April 2025, 7.30–9.30 pm

With Emeritus Professor John Pearn and Dr David Fahey

This webinar is specifically targeted to our Cadet/Youth Members but is also relevant to all St John Ambulance members including our Historical Society members.

Whether you're a seasoned presenter or new to public speaking, we all know how important it is for a presenter to effectively communicate and engage with their audience.

John Pearn and David Fahey are seasoned conference presenters having presented numerous times during St John Ambulance Australia History Seminars and, not to mention, during their own professional lives.

John and David will share their strategies for preparing and delivering great conference presentations. From structuring your paper and building your PowerPoint slides, to

handling questions with confidence, they'll cover essential tips and techniques that will help you communicate your work clearly and professionally.

If you have a specific question, please email the [History Secretary](#), before the webinar, and John and David will endeavour to have an answer for you during session.

SAVE THE DATE AND LOG-IN DETAILS TO YOUR CALENDAR:

Tuesday 29 April 2025, 7.30–9.30 pm

Microsoft TEAMS [Need help?](#)

Meeting ID: 437 073 787 656

Passcode: en9rv3VA

The August webinar will be on 'Preparing papers for publication'. We hope these two sessions will encourage people to submit papers to the November seminar, which this year, will have a focus on Cadets as we are celebrating 100 Years of Youth in Australia.

More Coming Events

Webinar. Hato Hone St John: The development of the Priory in New Zealand

Thursday 3 April, 4:30–5:30 am AEDT

This talk will explore the founding and development of Hato Hone St John (St John New Zealand), drawing on the Priory's extensive archives to uncover fascinating stories from the past.

Whether you're a history enthusiast or just curious to learn more, this is an event you won't want to miss!

Get your free ticket here: <https://bit.ly/4IG1G6x>

May 2025 — Our Lord Prior, will be hosting the meeting of the five Orders of the Alliance in London.

24 June 2025 — The AGM for the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia will be held online

15–21 September 2025 — The next Grand Council meeting of the Venerable Order is to be held in Canberra.

15 November 2025 — The next History Seminar, Chapter Meeting and Church Service will be held in Sydney. Details will follow in due course.

History Seminar, 15 November — We are hoping to devote to papers on Cadets as this year recognises the 100th anniversary of Cadets in Australia. Please consider mentoring a younger member for a paper for this exciting event and encourage younger members to attend.

Behind the Scenes at the Museums

Progress in NSW ... the Archives gets an injection!

Over the past six months, the St John NSW archives collection has undergone a significant transformation, setting the stage for a stronger future. For many years, Betty Stirton OAM DStJ served as our Honorary Archivist, dedicating three days a week to managing the collection at the St John NSW office and putting in additional work from home. When Betty retired in 2018, replacing her dedication and expertise was never going to be easy. Fortunately, Dr Matthew Glozier OStJ stepped into the role of Honorary Archivist and Librarian, ready to carry the collection forward.

However, the challenges of COVID-19, along with multiple relocations and office refits at the Burwood headquarters, severely impacted access to the archives collection. By early 2024, the NSW collection was in a difficult state, requiring significant effort to restore it to its pre-2018 condition and ensure its future preservation.

Recognising the need for support, I was asked in January 2024 to assist Matthew and the NSW Archives. The goal was to

strengthen the volunteer connection, given that Matthew's role reported to a General Manager responsible for corporate services. One of our key early realisations was that both Betty and Matthew had represented single-person dependencies, posing a significant risk and loss of knowledge. To secure the future of the archives in NSW, we needed a team approach.

Around this time, we received confirmation that the St John NSW office would be moving from Burwood to Macquarie Park, meaning the archives would need to be packed and relocated once again. While this presented logistical challenges, it also provided the perfect opportunity to rebuild and reimagine the collection's management.

With a clear plan in place, we advertised for volunteers to assist, recognising that the task was far too great for just Matthew and myself to handle alone now and into the future. Fast forward to February 2025, and we now have a dedicated team of six, a new home for the archives, and strong support from General Manager Vanessa Lorford-Mills MStJ, CEO Dominic Teakle, and our Board Chair Sean McGuinness CStJ.

Behind the Scenes at the Museums continued

The newly formed Archives Team consists of Matthew Glozier OStJ, Honorary Archivist and Librarian; Assistant Archivists, Joan Kyriazis, Rhonda Sneddon DStJ, Stephen Szabo, Sven Nilsson CStJ; and me as liaison/interface with St John NSW executive. Rhonda and Sven would be known to many of you, long term volunteers with extensive experience and commitment to St John both stating as cadets. Joan is a staff member in the training area and has decided to become a volunteer in her spare time helping archives and Stephen was a friend of St John but has now formally joined as a volunteer. Both Joan and

Stephen have a wonderful set of skills from outside St John to offer.

Together, this diverse group brings an incredible range of skills and experience, ensuring that the archives are not only restored but also well cared for and strategically developed for the future. With a strong foundation now in place, we look forward to preserving and celebrating St John NSW's rich history for years to come and keeping you updated on our progress of preserving the history and keeping our heritage alive.

John G Ward KStJ, Protocol and Services, St John NSW

Exploring the St John Museum in South Australia

These descriptions of items from the museum are given in visitor information sheets.

Ashford Litter

The Ashford Litter is an adapted German horse-drawn ambulance that is a light and mobile demountable stretcher with small detachable wheels. The under carriage is fitted with elliptical springs and a cranked axle so the stretcher bearers can pass between the wheels with the stretcher avoiding the need to lift it over the wheels. When travelling the legs of the under carriage are raised turning them into handles that are used to propel the litter. In 1875 the British Order of St John officially called these litters "St John Ambulances". The St John Ambulance Association was formed two years later in 1877, by which time "ambulance" had become a well-established word for any vehicle that conveyed the sick and injured to hospital. Ashford litters were used during the Anglo-Boer war, and to a limited extent during WW1. Although replaced within the regular ambulance service they continued to be used in some situations through to the early 1930s.



REA-EDWARDS LITTER

The Rea-Edwards litter was first introduced in 1904 and is known to be supplied by St John Ambulance until 1938. This item of equipment referred to as an Ambulance, was available with solid rubber tyred wooden wheels or pneumatic tyres (1903 invention) and designed to carry 2 styles of stretcher. The reduction in height of the wheels allowed for the easy lifting of a loaded stretcher over them and the previous cranked axle has been replaced with a straight one. A push bar capable of being raised or lowered is used at the head end. When raised as a handle it can be locked in a vertical position.



Peter Gill, Chair, Historical Society of South Australia

and from the National Collection ...

A Unique Gift: Pro Hart's Painted New Testament Bibles

In an extraordinary gesture of artistic generosity, celebrated Australian artist Pro Hart gifted two uniquely painted New Testament Bibles to the St John Ambulance Museum on 23 June 1996, providing a striking addition to our collection. Known for his vivid depictions of the Australian outback, as well as his ability to merge realism with a sense of abstraction, Hart's work on these Bibles blends both the sacred and the artistic in a profoundly personal way.

Pro Hart, a passionate supporter of St John Ambulance, was no stranger to the values of service and compassion. These Bibles, painted with his signature bold brushstrokes and rich colours, reflect not only his artistic brilliance but also his deep respect for the work of the organisation. Hart's connection to St John Ambulance is evident in the way his artwork brings a new energy and life to the ancient scriptures.

Beyond these painted Bibles, the St John Ambulance Museum is also fortunate to house several other works by Hart, including some autographed prints that adorn the office walls. These pieces, much like the Bibles, reflect his deep affinity for Australia's landscapes and the people who inhabit them, capturing the spirit of the land and its people.

Hart's work is a reminder of the intersection between art and service—two values that resonate deeply within the St John Ambulance community. The painted Bibles stand not only as works of art but as a symbol of Hart's commitment to elevating the everyday through creativity. Each brushstroke honours the role of St John Ambulance in promoting care, compassion, and community service.

This remarkable gift by Pro Hart is a testament to the enduring relationship



Pro Hart's paintings are on the outside back cover of the two pocket New Testaments. The textured acrylic paintings wrap around the spine. Below, the front covers.



between Australian art and the legacy of St John Ambulance. Through his work, Hart has left an indelible mark on the organisation, inspiring future generations to appreciate the beauty in both service and the arts. These Bibles are a cherished part of our museum's collection, linking creativity and community in a way that is uniquely Australian.

Teryn Edwards – Priority Administrator

St John Ambulance Model Collection: A Tribute to the Evolution of Medical Transport

The St John Australia Museum is home to a unique collection of miniature model ambulances, each representing a different era in the evolution of ambulance transport.

Behind the Scenes at the Museums continued

From early horse-drawn carriages to the more modern motorised ambulances, these models provide a fascinating visual history of how ambulance services have developed over time. All models in the collection proudly bear the iconic St John Ambulance logo, reflecting the organisation's long-standing association with emergency medical care. The models (perhaps with the exception of the one made of LEGO!) depict genuine St John Ambulances.

St John Ambulance, which began its ambulance work in the UK in the 1870s, quickly expanded its services internationally, becoming an integral part of emergency medical response in many countries, including Australia. The vehicles represented in this collection span several decades and showcase the advancements in medical transport—from early horse-drawn ambulances, which were essential for transporting patients in rural or hard-to-reach areas, to the more advanced motorised ambulances of the mid-20th century, which allowed for faster and more efficient care.

The majority of these models were owned by Queensland paramedic Allen Marr, whose passion for St John Ambulance history led him to collect these pieces over time. Their availability was made known through Marr's colleague, Peter McMurtrie, who was the St John Ambulance Commissioner in Queensland. Together, they ensured the collection found its way to the museum, where it continues to serve as a tribute to the innovation, dedication, and history of St John Ambulance.

This impressive array of models not only showcases the evolution of ambulance designs but also highlights the ongoing commitment of St John Ambulance to providing vital care in times of need. Visitors to the museum are invited to explore the changes in ambulance transport and reflect on the legacy of St John's emergency services around the world.

Teryn Edwards – Priory Administrator



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Introducing the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia website

We are very excited to announce the launch of the [St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society's website \(https://history.stjohn.org.au\)](https://history.stjohn.org.au), a new online resource dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history of our organisation. This site is already shaping up to be a valuable collection of stories, photos, and insights, contributed by a diverse group of passionate individuals who deeply know the legacy of St John.



As a work in progress, the website will continue to grow, with new content and resources added over time. But we need your help! If you have any stories, documents, or historical information about St John Ambulance that you would like to share, we invite you to contribute. Your input will help ensure the website becomes an even richer repository of knowledge for future generations.

We encourage all readers to visit regularly and keep an eye out for new updates and additions. Together, with your contributions, we can build a comprehensive and ever-evolving resource that celebrates the past, present, and future of St John Ambulance.

Thank you to everybody who has supported the building of this site; it has been such a thrill to learn so much about our organisation. I'm on maternity leave until July so, in the meantime, please email gabrielle.lhuede@stjohn.org.au to share your knowledge, offer suggestions, or ask how you can get involved.

Thank you for being part of this exciting journey!

Teryn Edwards – Priory Administrator



Museum of the Order of St John — Member Rolls

Another collection in the St John Archive has been digitised: the Order of St John's Member Rolls! This digitisation project was made possible thanks to a generous financial donation from the St John Historical Society.

What are the Member Rolls?

The Member Rolls list the names and dates of admission and promotion to the Order of people from all over the world who were alive at the date the Roll was published (although in rare situations an individual may not feature in the Rolls because they were admitted to the Order and died between the publication years of two Rolls, but this is very unusual).

When were the Rolls published?

Member Rolls were produced sporadically, and we have digitised the complete collection of 18 volumes which cover the following years:

Museum of the Order of St John: Member Rolls continued

- | | | |
|-------------|--------|--------|
| • 1868–1892 | • 1924 | • 1961 |
| • 1902–1903 | • 1928 | • 1965 |
| • 1906–1908 | • 1931 | • 1970 |
| • 1910–1911 | • 1936 | • 1975 |
| • 1915–1916 | • 1946 | • 1980 |
| • 1919 | • 1957 | • 1989 |

Where can I access the Rolls?

The digitised PDFs (which are searchable) are available online on *issuu*, where the Museum hosts the other digitised archival resources. You can access them by clicking on the following link: <https://issuu.com/museumoftheorderofstjohn/stacks>.



Why are the Member Rolls helpful?

The Member Rolls are accessed quite frequently internally by the Priory of England and the Island's Chancery team, and also by the team at the Museum of the Order of St John when responding to enquiries. It can be time-consuming to search through the hard copies of the Rolls, so having quick-access digitised copies will make this bit of work slightly easier and more efficient. It also provides public access to another collection, meaning that members of the public can search these records themselves and that we can direct enquirers to search these records themselves.

Sophie Denman, Archivist, Museum of the Order of St John



The Challenge

Without paying a personal visit to the collection housed at the National Office and reading the caption, can anybody tell us what this article is? Providing an image of the back should make you guess easy! So, the real challenge is to describe the coat of arms, and if you can, tell us the story behind the item. If not, there will be an extensive description in the next issue of *Pro Utilitate*!





Previous Challenges

Matthew Glozier offered the following cross, and your Editor offered a simpler challenge in the form of a coin ...

Ian Howie-Willis responded to 'The Challenges' as follows: (a) my guess is that Matthew's elaborate Maltese cross medal is from a Masonic 'order of Hospitallers' or even of 'Templars', however, not being a Mason myself I wouldn't know which one; (b) and as for Elizabeth's coin, I suspect it might be a present-day Maltese Euro, perhaps a €0.50 coin.

Note from the Editor: It is indeed a Euro specially minted to celebrate Malta's participation in the European Union.



Australian Heraldry

The armorial bearings of the late John David Spencer AM GCStJ

John Spencer was President of State Council, St John Ambulance New South Wales, from 2017 to 2020. He had previously served in the position of Commissioner of St John Ambulance Brigade, New South Wales (1993–99) and had overall oversight of St John NSW's magnificent role at the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

The significance of the armorial bearings

The shield in the top quadrant displays the Arms of the Order: Gules (red) a cross argent (silver), in the first quarter a representation of the Sovereign's Crest.

The lower quadrant displays a green cross (the international symbol for first aid) which includes the stars of the Southern Cross symbolising the Australian Priory of the Order.

The four quarters of the cross display quills to represent John's profession as a Chartered Accountant.

The two crusader knights (supporters to the Arms) depict the origins of the Order during the crusades when Knights Hospitallers protected travelling pilgrims.

The Arms (the shield) is displayed on the Badge of the Order (in the background) with the neck badge suspended below the Arms. The Kangaroo Head to the bearings, is a 'nod' to the Australia.

The motto below the Arms, 'Reach for the sky', is the title of a book by Paul Brickhill on the life of Group Captain Sir Douglas Robert Stuart Bader CBE, DSO & Bar, DFC & Bar, MID DL whose attitude to life inspired John to adopt it as a motto.





27th instalment from
Dr Ian Howie-Willis KStJ

Note from the Editor

Please write a letter to the Editor if you would like to contribute to this or any other discussion.

What is history? Philosophies of history

Most historians will consciously or perhaps unwittingly subscribe to their own philosophy of history. That is, their practice as historians will be guided by what they regard as the purposes of history and their role in writing it. Various philosophies of history have arisen, not all of them compatible with each other. For example, 'Progressivism' sees history as an account of how human society continually makes progress towards improvement. 'Nihilism', by contrast, rejects the idea of 'progress' because in the long run societies do not improve but end in chaos.

The Nihilists, borrowing from physics, accept the notion of 'entropy', which for physicists is the degree of disorder and uncertainty that can be observed in a system. Entropy is seen, for example, in the tendency of matter to become degraded.

Because of entropy, the general trend of the universe is towards disorder and destruction, not only in material substances but in human societies as well.

Entropy may be seen, for instance, in the fall of civilisations like those of ancient Greece and Rome in Europe, Egypt and Babylon in the Middle East, the Aztecs, Mayans and Incas in the Americas, Benin in present-day Nigeria, the Khmers in Cambodia, and many dozens of others. Resource depletion, environmental degradation, pestilence, famine, natural disasters, invasion, conquest, revolution, economic collapse and organisational implosion were common themes in their downfall.

Whatever the historians associated with this Historical Society might think about such notions, most will probably be empiricists. That is, they will be guided by 'Empiricism'. This is a philosophy that focuses on human *experience* and the facts of what has happened. Facts are the empiricists' evidence; and they use their evidence to develop a narrative to explain how and why things happened and what the consequences were.

As a practising historian, I must continually ask myself what my own philosophy of history is. Do I have one; or do I blunder on, writing my articles and books without any deeper understanding of why I'm doing it? Am I oblivious of the philosophical ramifications of what I produce?

I generally answer my own questions by affirming that I'm an empirical social historian. In other words, I'm interested in how human societies function, how the myriad groups within them interact, and what the outcomes are. My aim in writing about them retrospectively is to share my understanding with others — my audience. If they disagree with me, we'll discuss and debate our points of contention, and through that process we'll arrive at more accurate conclusions about the past.

In any historical research project, I begin by trying to determine the facts of what happened. I will obtain these from multiple sources, which might be documentary (letters, diaries, annual reports, newspapers, journal articles, books etc), oral (what people have said or have told me), or artefacts (items in museums, photographs, paintings, maps, physical objects etc). The more sources the better. From the details I've gathered I then develop a narrative to explain how and why things turned out like they did, and what the long-term implications were.

What is history? continued

Although I naturally wish to understand the events making up the story I'm telling, I'm not much interested in using the narrative as the basis for abstract theorising. I don't try to formulate grand theories in the various 'isms' — capitalism, liberalism, socialism, conservatism, nationalism, communism, colonialism, imperialism, egalitarianism, theism, gnosticism, functionalism, environmentalism, feminism, racism, to name but a few. I'll leave that to the philosophers of history who specialise in philosophically interpreting historical narratives.

But does that mean my historical writing is 'philosophy-free'? I hope not, because I consciously strive to do the following:

- consult *all* the relevant sources; and seek out *all* the available evidence
- stick to the facts; and *never* make them up if there's no evidence for them (because that would mean writing fiction rather than history)
- look at problems from all angles; and recognise that alternative explanations are often possible
- be fair in making judgements; and be aware that others reviewing the same facts might make different judgements
- when expressing personal views, make it clear that that's what I'm doing.

If I succeed in achieving all that, then what I write will be the product of evidence-based empiricism. I will not have set out to prove or disprove any historiographical 'theory' but instead will have been experientially guided by the evidence I've found. I *experience* the evidence as it makes an impression on me. It accordingly shapes my understanding.

Sometimes the evidence will run counter to my previous experience, preconceptions and expectations. When that happens, I must rely on the evidence and must revise my thinking. A case in point is my recent work on Dr Katie Ardill-Brice OBE, DStJ (1886–1955), a great St John heroine of the 1920s–1950s in New South Wales.

'Dr Katie', as I affectionately call her, was a towering figure in St John who was the first Australian woman to break through the St John 'glass ceiling'. Dr Katie was an early female graduate in medicine from the University of Sydney who specialised in gynaecology. With her hyphenated name, I'd wrongly guessed she must have been from a wealthy 'establishment' family, one that could afford to send her to medical school. To the contrary, the evidence indicated that Dr Katie's parents were evangelical Christians, lower-middle-class Baptists who spent their lives engaged in grass-roots charitable outreach work among the poor and disadvantaged in Sydney's inner southern and western suburbs.

Something of the parents' idealism survived in Dr Katie, a forceful, tough and domineering character. Unlike them, she wasn't an evangelical Baptist but for the 34 years until her death she ran a free weekly medical clinic in Bankstown for the wives and children of ex-servicemen. Why did she do this? She never explained, but it had to do with her World War I experience as a medical officer on active service with the British Royal Army Medical Corps in France. She joined the British Army because the Australian Army didn't recruit female doctors. The Bankstown clinic was her way of 'giving back' to the community for the privileges she had enjoyed as a medical specialist in both war and peace.

I don't know what philosophers of history might make of Dr Katie's life and good works; however, for me as someone who had to write about her, ferreting out the facts of her career and then weaving these into a coherent narrative were a special pleasure. At the end of it all, I felt sorry I'd never met her. (She died in Sydney as I was about to begin Year 12 at Melbourne High School.) If meeting her were possible, I'd tell her how much I admire her, and what a strong influence she has been in my own St John career.

Dr Ian Howie-Willis KStJ

Order a piece of St John Ambulance history now!

The Premier Response. St John Ambulance in New South Wales 1881–2021.

by Matthew Glozier for St John
Ambulance NSW

This book is a thorough and investigative look at the 140-year history of St John Ambulance in Sydney, from the very first initial first aid class, the creation of a St John Ambulance Brigade, and more. It speaks to the value of the St John organisation in the minds of both Colony's

leaders and the general public over the years, marking a significant part of our history.

Written by our very own Hon. Archivist and Librarian, Dr Matthew Glozier, *The Premier Response* is going to be published and provided at cost (pending adequate sales during the presale period). We're hopeful for the delivery of this book in the second half of 2025.

A wonderful way to honour and keep the history of St John alive.

Here's a sneak peak from the book:

The 1920s and '30s were a period of growth and expansion for St John Ambulance all over New South Wales. The experience of the Great War had been one of productive cooperation with like-minded voluntary bodies... This opened eyes

to what could be achieved through united effort, as opposed to disunited local activity. Unlike the Anglo-Boer War, which was a largely New South Wales effort, the Great War had created opportunities for St John Ambulance leadership that carried across the whole nation. Thus, the period between two world wars saw the real birth of effort towards a whole-Australia St John Ambulance reality.



BERT sure looked a little
different back in the day!



Pre-order your copy today at
Premier Response presale <https://premier-response.raiselysite.com/or>
call our customer service team
on 1300 785 646.

Women and the Order in *One St John* Vol. 10

Matthew Glozier, who seems indefatigable, is also seeking articles for *One St John* Volume 10 (2025–2026) which will focus on women and the Order (medieval, modern, future). Matthew is encouraging research papers on the following topics:

- earliest Serving Sisters
- first Royal women members in the 1870s and 1880s
- the Nursing Cadet movement
- Matrons and Sisters of the Eye Hospital
- VOSJ: one of the earliest honours available to women
- the Linen Guild
- female saint of the Knights Hospitaller
- the significance of Edwina Mountbatten

So many possibilities; lots of potential!

We remind you again that Matthew has been working on a complete bibliography of St John Ambulance published histories –international, national, State, Territory and local histories. Ian Howie-Willis was recently able to add some to this list, and Teryn Edwards has loaded this up onto our new history website, under 'Library': <https://history.stjohn.org.au/library/>



2025 Membership

We remind you to renew your Historical Society membership subscription for 2025 if you wish to continue your benefits as a member. You can do that here:

<https://history.stjohn.org.au/membership/>

As a paid-up member, you receive three issues of *Pro Utilitate*, a copy of *St John History*, discounted attendance fee for the Seminar and, not to mention, access to a wealth of information on the ancient and modern history of our international organisation.

History of the Retired and Former Members Network (RMN) in NSW

The Retired Members Network (RMN) was a concept proposed by the State Officer, Harry Delaney in early 2013. The purpose of the Retired Members Network is to provide an environment for retired St John members to continue to receive communication and network with St John Ambulance Australia (NSW). A proposal and Terms of Reference were developed and presented to the Commissioner Ken Kelman for approval to establish the Network. The Commissioner approved the Network on 19 July 2013. Following the approval by the Commissioner to establish the Network, a dedicated email address was established for the network rmn@stjohnnsw.com.au.

Advertising of the new work started on the 12 August 2013 with an application being received on that day. The first application was from John Spencer closely followed by Betty Stirton. Previous retired members groups have operated in NSW, with the previous group closing in the late 1990s. The new Network is very much about the sharing of information by mail, especially email. In March 2018 the name of the Network was changed to the Retired and Former Members Network, to open the Network up to a wider group of people. Anyone who was a member of St John Ambulance Australia from any area of St John and served during their membership in St John NSW is able to join the Network.

The Network may meet face to face twice a year at St John HQ Burwood. Members of the Network will be encouraged to attend the St John NSW AGM, Annual Awards Ceremony, St John NSW State Council Christmas Party and other relevant meetings and events.

John G Ward CStJ, Assistant Commissioner, Strategy and Services

And finally ...

We are delighted to congratulate Teryn Edwards on the safe arrival of Finn Ainsley Dickson on 24 February. His big sister is smitten!

The next 2025 issue (No 2025-2) will be out in early August, with a deadline for contributions by 15 July.

Without your contributions of letters, articles, and historical ideas the PU would not be nearly as interesting as it is. Thank you.

Dr Elizabeth Ellis OStJ

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