



Pro Utilitate

Preserving and promoting the St John heritage.

Newsletter of The St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia

Issue 2025/2

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From the Editor

It was my very great honour and privilege to accompany the Lord Prior on his recent visit to London, Dublin, Gibraltar, and Malta for St John. It was extremely inspiring to meet so many people who are working so hard at researching the history of the Order, preserving, and making it available locally and internationally. As Ian Howie-Willis puts so eloquently in this issue: 'we have a lot to thank historians for'. A scrapbook of photographs from that trip are at the end of this issue.

Another reminder that 2025 is a very historical year, being 100 years since the commencement of the Cadet movement here in Australia. Throughout the year, this historic occasion has been celebrated with events at local, state, territory, and national levels. We will be celebrating this milestone during our Annual History Seminar in November.



The Priory of Australia will be hosting the Grand Council meetings of the International Order of St John in Canberra in September. It's been 13 years since the Priory of Australia has hosted this special meeting. We wish the Lord Prior and all the representatives attending a very productive meeting.

Dr Elizabeth Ellis



President's Message

Our new Membership database — <https://sjaa25.tidyhq.com/>

A big thank you to you all for embracing our new Membership database which I introduced in the last issue of *Pro Utilitate*. It's yet another piece of software to navigate and a new password to remember, but within a fortnight of making the site 'live' almost 100% of historical members used the platform to renew their memberships.

You have personal access to the Membership database, where you are invited to keep your contact details up to date (and your financial membership). It also means you won't miss out on event notifications and your copy of *Pro Utilitate*! The site also hosts a 'Donation' menu item, and you'll find all forthcoming activities detailed under 'Events'. If you require any assistance navigating the site, please email [Gab Lhuede](#) at the AO with your queries. This site is new so there may still be issues to resolve—we appreciate your feedback and patience.

My thanks again to Brad Speller in the AO for thoroughly researching and testing multiple membership platforms before identifying the most suitable one for our needs. He also configured the system, designed the interface, established payment processes, and imported the existing data.

Historical Society website — <https://history.stjohn.org.au/>

Content on our website is a rolling feast! Digital scanning has been completed and PDFs produced of five significant books from the Priory Library: *Celebrating Women in St John* (Hasler & Howie-Willis 2012), *A Century For Australia*, (Howie-Willis 1983), *South Australians and St John Ambulance* (Howie-Willis 1985), *First in First Aid: The history of St John Ambulance in Queensland* (Wales & Pearn 1998), and *The Zambucks* (Howie-Willis 2002).

We have identified from the library a wealth of member resources which we think will be of interest to our members. For example, we will be scanning Drill instruction manuals, Cadet manuals, Regulations going back to the 1930s, and many more items. Digitising our library assets is an invaluable and vital activity which will ensure the longevity and value of the Australian Priory history. Gab Lhuede, with her long publishing experience, will advise us on any copyright reproduction so that we are compliant and there is no risk to the AO and Priory. Gab will also investigate if publications exist on other platforms which we can link and direct members to.

Dr David Fahey

(on behalf of the Historical Society Executive)

Awards and recognition

King's Birthday honours list

- Brigadier Peter J Evans KStJ of the ACT, who received the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his services to veterans and the ACT community. Brig. Evans was the St John Ambulance Commissioner for the ACT for six years and later chaired the ACT St John Board for two years. He is also a Knight within the Sovereign Military and Hospitaller Order of Malta (the Catholic Order of St John).
- Mrs Lynette D Pole CStJ of South Australia, who received the OAM for her community service through emergency response organisations. Mrs Pole's long life in St John began as a Cadet in Port Pirie in 1966. She holds the Order's 'Ultra-Long Service Medal' with bar.
- Mr Ian G Pole OStJ of South Australia (husband of Lynette Pole above), who received the OAM for community service through emergency response organisations. Mr Pole's long St John career began in 1967. Like his wife, he holds the Order's 'Ultra-Long Service Medal' with bar.



Coming events

August Webinar - Preparing your paper for publication

PLEASE NOTE that the meeting login details have changed. The webinar will be now hosted on ZOOM, if you'd please save to your calendar for Tuesday 26 August!

Join Zoom Meeting ...

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84022107380?pwd=J8oVaFXQ6uNBDrCHUCusEukb6c0ify.1>

Meeting ID: 840 2210 7380

Passcode: 139331

Find your local number: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/84022107380?pwd=J8oVaFXQ6uNBDrCHUCusEukb6c0ify.1>

Tuesday 26 August 2025, 7.30–9.30 pm

With Dr Matthew Glozier and Dr Ian Howie-Willis

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 publishing your work we all know

how important it is for our gradually deepening knowledge of the history of our Order to be preserved and promoted.

Mathew and Ian have had responsibility for many St John publications and have years of experience between them presenting at History Seminars and, not to mention, during their own professional lives. This session will be moderated by Gab Lhuede.

If you have a specific question, please email the History Secretary (history.secretary@stjohn.org.au), before the webinar, and Matthew and Ian will endeavour to have an answer for you during session.

We hope the two sessions we have offered this year will encourage people to submit papers to the November seminar.

15-21 September 2025 — Grand Council

The next Grand Council meeting of the Venerable Order is to be held in Canberra. The Grand Council is the international meeting of the Venerable Order and will include representatives from all the Priories and some of the Associations. <https://www.gc2025.com.au/>

Coming events continued

22 November 2025 — History Seminar, Chapter and Church Service

The next History Seminar, Chapter meeting and Church Service will be held in Canberra. See the notice for the details of all these events at the end of the newsletter. The call for papers for the Seminar was distributed on 24 July. If you did not receive this information, please contact history.secretary@stjohn.org.au

This is the Seminar that we are hoping to devote to papers on Cadets as it will be 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.

You must register by 7 November (for catering purposes) if you intend to come to the Historical Society Seminar. To purchase your registration, go to: <https://www.trybooking.com/DDNLJ>

Recent events

16 April 2025 — The Governor General was installed as the Prior of Australia at Government House, Yarralumla.



14–16 May 2025 — The Lord Prior, hosted the meeting of the Alliance of the Orders of Saint John of Jerusalem, in London. The Alliance includes the Venerable Order, the three Johannitor Orders and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. From there he travelled to Dublin, Gibraltar and Malta working with each of these active St John Associations to continue to grow and develop.



24 June 2025 — The AGM for the St John Historical Society of Australia was held on-line with 28 attendees and a great deal of progress, nationally and from the states, to report on. The State reports are particularly inspiring and worth a look. Minutes and reports from this meeting can be found

on the St John Historical Society website: <https://history.stjohn.org.au/>

Following the AGM, Neil Dine from the Victorian History Society shared the two posters they produced, recognising the Centenary of Youth. If you want to help celebrate this St John milestone, contact Gab Lhuede (gabrielle.lhuede@stjohn.org.au) for the 'press-ready' files. They can be sent straight to an Officeworks for banner reproduction. Thanks Neil!

4–25 July 2025 — The Lord Prior, returned to England for further St John work, and came home via Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Visiting a mothers and babies' clinic was a highlight.



Thanks and farewell to Teryn Edwards, Priory Administrator

— We are sorry to notify you that Teryn will not be coming back to work with St John in Canberra due to family reasons. Other than most ably assisting Kylie in the Priory office and becoming a good friend to the team over those 6 months, Teryn's main contribution was her work with our President on populating the History Society website. We look forward to continuing our great working relationship with Gab Lhuede.

Vale Dr Barry Price MStJ (1936–2025)

Dr Barry John Price MStJ (1936–2025) died in Canberra on 11 April, four days short of his 89th birthday. Long-time members of St John Event Health Services will remember Dr Price with gratitude for having been the inaugural National Manager Volunteers in the Australian Office of St John Ambulance Australia. Recruited by the then Priory Secretary, the late Charles Campbell GCStJ, Dr Price held this position with distinction for the ten years 1991–2001. In all that time he was effectively the national secretary for the then Operation Branch. His achievements in the position were varied and included being executive officer to produce the Operations Branch national centenary history, *The Zambuks* (2002). Dr Price was a consummate administrator. To borrow a phrase, he was 'the complete bureaucrat'—someone content to work in the background tirelessly, efficiently and effectively, uninterested in self-promotion or sharing the limelight, content with the knowledge that under his tutelage Operation Branch was being managed efficiently and better than ever before.

Dr Price came to the Australian Office of St John after a distinguished career in government education in the ACT. A farm boy from northern NSW, he opted for teaching rather farming after leaving school. Following a B.A. (Hons.) in History and then a Dip. Ed. at the University of Sydney, he

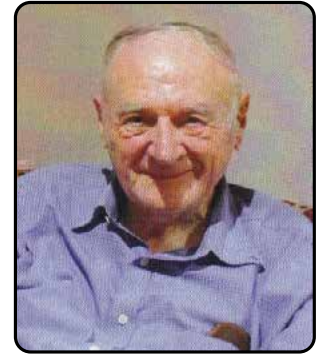
taught in NSW high schools before arriving in the ACT in 1965 to be the inaugural head of the History Department at Campbell High School, which was then within the NSW state school system.

Dr Price was also a practising historian.

A prominent member of the Canberra Historical Society for many years, his chief interest was ACT education history. He published many articles and various books, including several school history textbooks, a history of the school his sons attended, and a history of Watson, his Canberra suburb. Unfortunately, he did not join the St John Ambulance Historical Society, perhaps because he realised that others were taking the lead there. Despite that, he was greatly respected by those who collaboratively established the Historical Society, by the Australian Office staff who were his colleagues, and by the members of the Operations Branch Headquarters team that he diligently served.

Ian Howie-Willis

(who worked with Dr Price in both ACT Education and St John Ambulance Australia, and represented St John Ambulance Australia at his funeral)



Dr Barry J Price MStJ
(1936–2025)

Appointment of the New Priory Dean

The Very Reverend Dr Andreas Loewe has been appointed as the next Dean of the Australian Priory of the Order of St John, effective 15 June 2025. A Commander of the Order, Dr Loewe brings to the role a combination of theological depth, pastoral sensitivity, and distinguished leadership. Dr Loewe shared the following message upon his appointment:

I am delighted to have been asked to become the inaugural Dean of the Priory of Australia of the Order of St John. St John undertakes remarkable, lifesaving work in Australia and across the globe. All of us serve voluntarily driven by our faith and values in service of humanity. I look forward to offering my gifts as a faith leader to strengthen chaplaincy across Australia, support local first responders, and help ensure that our values and faith continue to shape our mission. Like all our volunteers, I will do this alongside my day job as Dean of Melbourne drawing on 12 years of experience leading Victoria's metropolitan Cathedral.

Adapted from the notice to members from Cameron Oxley GCStJ, Chancellor of the Australian Priory



Very Reverend Dr Andreas Loewe

From the Priory Secretary

We extend a warm welcome to our incoming Dean, The Very Reverend Dr Andreas Loewe CStJ. This role will continue the tradition of pastoral and liturgical services, and spiritual care within our membership. I also reiterate our sincere gratitude to our outgoing Dean, The Right Reverend Richard Hurford KStJ OAM who has played such an important role in our organisation including his committed leadership in the Chaplaincy work across our States and Territories. I extend my personal thanks to Bishop Hurford for his valued insights and genuine friendship whilst I have been working with him as CEO and Priory Secretary.

Brendan Maher

Behind the scenes of the National Collection

Norma Bell: A legacy of leadership and service

In 1939, Norma Bell received her certificate from St John Ambulance Australia for completing a First Aid course. This certificate, now part of the St John Ambulance Australia Museum collection, is not just a recognition of a personal achievement—it is a symbol of the beginning of Norma's long-standing support for the organisation. Her contribution to St John Ambulance was profound, particularly through her vision for nurturing future leaders.

St John Ambulance has a rich history of training individuals in first aid, providing ambulance services, and promoting health and safety in communities across Australia. Over the years, the organisation has become a cornerstone of public service and community care. For Norma, supporting St John's mission went beyond her initial First Aid course. She saw the importance of developing young leaders who would carry forward the values of service, compassion, and excellence.

In recognition of this, Norma made a generous bequest to St John Ambulance, hoping to support youth leadership initiatives. St John then established the Norma Bell Youth Leadership Award. The award, which continues to inspire young people today, provides financial support and encouragement to outstanding young leaders within St John Ambulance, empowering them to make a difference in their communities.

The certificate awarded to Norma Bell in 1939 now holds a special place in the museum, serving as a reminder of her commitment to the principles of St John Ambulance. It symbolises the start of a legacy that continues to impact the organisation, particularly through the Norma Bell Youth Leadership Award, which nurtures future generations of leaders.

Norma's certificate is not just a piece of history — it is a tangible connection to the lasting influence of her vision. It reminds us that her belief in the importance of leadership and service lives on through the award that bears her name, and through the many young leaders who continue to carry forward the work of St John Ambulance.

Teryn Edwards, Immediate-past Priory Administrator



A story from the NSW archives — Arnold Thomas Phillips KStJ, 29 May 1928–24 July 2011

Tom Phillips began his lifelong service with St John New South Wales in 1941 as a Cadet. Over a distinguished career spanning more than five decades, he rose through the ranks to become District (State) Operations Officer, a role he held from 1978 until his retirement in 1993. Renowned for his leadership and organisational skills, Tom played a pivotal role in shaping the operational excellence of major events such as the Royal Easter Show and City2Surf. He recorded over 7,400 hours of public duty in his final 13 years alone, not including his substantial administrative contributions.

Tom was admitted to the Order of St John as a Serving Brother in 1977 and was later promoted to Knight of Grace in 1994. In recognition of his outstanding community service, he was awarded the Centenary Medal in 2001. Even after formal retirement, Tom remained active through the District Support Unit, continuing his dedication to service in a non-clinical capacity.

Tom's full story can be found on the HS website, here: <https://history.stjohn.org.au/new-south-wales/>



Museum of the Order of St John

Newly launched online collections platform

Visitors can now explore highlights from the Museum's collections—from rare manuscripts and ceremonial objects to medical innovations and stories of humanitarian service—all from the comfort of their own home. As well as the ability to browse objects, the team have curated six themes, or mini 'online exhibitions'.

The platform launches with 200 objects and hundreds more will be added over the coming months with a particular focus on

the St John Ambulance collections in the build up to the 150th anniversary in 2027.

To start exploring, visit the Collections page on our website (<https://museumstjohn.org.uk/>) and scroll down to 'Explore the Museum Collections'.

Anna Mason, Head of Collections & Public Engagement, Museum of the Order of St John

SHORTLISTED
2024



FAMILY FRIENDLY
MUSEUM AWARD

Check this out! The Museum is a great place to recommend to family and friends when in London.

Historical Society's website

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

Would you like to contribute to the Historical Society's website? 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!

The Challenge

A member enquired of the Victorian Museum whether anyone in the wider St John network knows the origins or story associated with this St John Ambulance Association Fireman's badge. If you've got the story behind this, we'd love the opportunity to share it with members.



The Previous Challenge

The significance of the Nurse's buckles. A symbol of courage and sacrifice.

Among the artifacts displayed at the St John Museum is a pair of silver nurse's belt buckles, which stand as powerful symbols of the critical role women played during World War I. These beautifully crafted accessories, featuring Maltese coins from 1780, not only showcase exquisite craftsmanship but also illuminate the important contributions of women in wartime healthcare and service.



The buckles, which likely date back to the period of World War I, were created in Malta, where such accessories were commonly worn by nurses. The intricate filigree design, with a small fleur-de-lis at the centre, reflects both the style of the time and the practical needs of women working under extreme conditions to care for soldiers. These women, members of the St John Ambulance Brigade, were on the front lines, providing essential medical care to the wounded, perhaps under fire or in dangerous conditions.

The coins embedded in the buckles are engraved with the name 'F. Emmanuel de Rohan M.M.H.S.S.a reference to Fra Emmanuel de Rohan-Polduc, the second-last Grand Master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, an organisation known for its long history of providing medical care, especially during wartime. The inclusion of these coins ties the buckles to the legacy of service upheld by the Order of Malta and reflects the values of mercy and care that guided the women who wore them.

They were donated to the St John Museum in 2004 by Charles A Campbell GCStJ, who purchased the items in Moss Vale around 2000. Unbeknownst to him at the time, these buckles would come to symbolise the quiet courage and selfless service of the women who wore them during one of history's most devastating conflicts.

Remembering the Unsung Heroes

As we reflect on these buckles today, we are reminded of the quiet but essential contributions made by women during times of war. These women were unsung heroes—often overlooked by history—but their service was indispensable to the success

of wartime medical efforts. The silver belt buckles, now part of the St John Museum collection, stand as a lasting tribute to their bravery, their sacrifices, and their unwavering dedication to serving others.

The story of these buckles is not just one of historical interest, but a reminder of the vital role that women have played, and continue to play, in healthcare, service, and humanitarian aid. Through the donation of these buckles, Charles A. Campbell has helped ensure that the legacy of the women who wore them will never be forgotten. These buckles are more than artifacts; they are enduring symbols of courage, compassion, and the quiet strength of women who, in times of crisis, stepped forward to heal, comfort, and serve.

Teryn Edwards, Immediate-past Priory Administrator

For those who want to read more, see The nurse's buckles, 'A deeper legacy. The women who wore the buckles' is available on the HS website, here: <https://history.stjohn.org.au/the-nurses-buckles/>

Clinical history

Eponymous airways — Part 1

Dr David Fahey

Introduction

The first artificial airway devices were used to perform a tracheotomy, a procedure which has been performed since antiquity¹ to overcome airway obstruction due to infection (especially diphtheria), cancer, and trauma. With the introduction of ether anaesthesia, a new type of upper airway obstruction was recognised,² caused by the tongue and other tissues in a supine, unconscious patient. A similar problem also exists in an unconscious patient in need of resuscitation. This paper examines one artificial airway device which is known by the name of its inventor—Guedel. The Guedel airway was introduced as an adjunct for use during anaesthesia, and is now ubiquitous in all resuscitation settings.

Arthur Ernest Guedel

Arthur Ernest Guedel was born in rural Indiana on 13 June 1883.³ Guedel overcame significant hardships to enter and complete his medical degree. From a blue-collar rural background, at the age of 14 years he lost three fingers on his right hand when helping his father at a saw mill.⁴ Despite this handicap, he not only graduated with first class honours, he also excelled

at swimming and piano.⁴ After graduation from the University of Indiana in 1908 he worked as a general practitioner, and administered anaesthetics to supplement his income. Increasingly, Guedel specialised in anaesthesia.³

Early in his career, Guedel emerged as a thinker and inventor. For example, in 1912 he patented a device that permitted self-administration of nitrous oxide during labour.⁴ This was twenty years before Minnitt described his 'gas and air' apparatus.⁵

When the USA entered World War I in 1917, Guedel tried to enlist but was rejected because of his hand injury. However, he persisted and was eventually accepted into the army and deployed to France.⁴ On one occasion, he worked for 72 hours non-stop, and oversaw 40 operating tables. He described the 'deplorable lack of knowledge of anesthesia in the [Army] medical corps',⁶ but in his own inimitable style, Guedel took it upon himself to find solutions to improve this situation. Faced with a severe shortage of doctors skilled in anaesthesia, Guedel trained nurses and medics to give simple anaesthetics, based on a systematic approach.⁴ To facilitate this training, he devised a chart showing the 'stages of anesthesia' according to the respiratory pattern, pupil changes, eye movements, and other signs.^{3,4,7}



Dr Arthur Guedel in WWI US Army uniform.⁴

In order to supervise and teach anaesthesia, Guedel travelled between military hospitals using a motorcycle.⁸ His larger than life personality was summarised by one Commanding Officer who informed a new medical recruit that '... You will have

to see Guedel. He runs anesthesia in this region. He blows in here every day or two, like a wild [man], on a motorcycle ...'.⁷ Captain Guedel returned home in 1919.

Oropharyngeal airways began to appear in the early 1900s to prevent and overcome upper airway obstruction during anaesthesia. The original airway designed by Hewitt in 1908⁹ was made of stiff red rubber with sharp edges; initially straight and later with a curve that did not match the airway anatomy. Ralph Waters designed a metal airway in 1930 with an improved shape.¹⁰



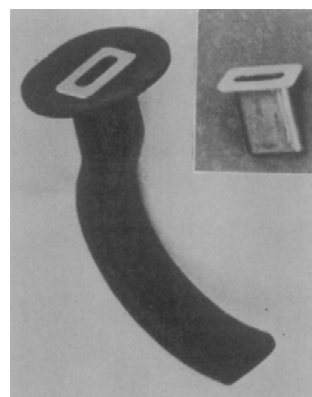
(a)



(b)

Hewitt's airway: (a) 1908⁹ and (b) 1913.¹²

Guedel's oropharyngeal airway was constructed of black rubber and was 'sufficiently soft and flexible not to traumatise—yet amply rigid to maintain an open ... air passage under all conditions'.¹¹ Occlusion of the airway by biting was prevented by a metal insert, which was encased within the rubber to protect the teeth.¹¹ This revolutionary device was reported in the medical literature in 1933 in a humble letter to the editor. Since 1933, Guedel's airway has remained essentially unchanged, except that it is now constructed of disposable plastic.



Guedel's original airway, from his 1933 paper,¹¹ and a modern plastic Guedel airway.

Guedel's many other contributions included the design of cuffed endotracheal tubes. To prove that his cuffed tubes would protect the lungs from aspiration, he anaesthetised and intubated his own pet dog in 1928, which was then submerged underwater while Guedel gave a lecture. The dog recovered from anaesthesia with wet fur but dry lungs, and an applause from the audience.⁴ Guedel's dog was named 'Airway'.

Conclusion

Despite its simplicity, Guedel's airway is an essential life-saving device, found in all emergency settings. Unfortunately, it is increasingly being referred to by the generic term 'oropharyngeal airway' (or worse, 'OP airway') which sadly fails to acknowledge its inventor. Perhaps Guedel is too hard to spell? The next article will examine two more eponymous airways (those of Safar and Brook) which were both inspired by the Guedel airway, and were both used to facilitate rescue breathing.

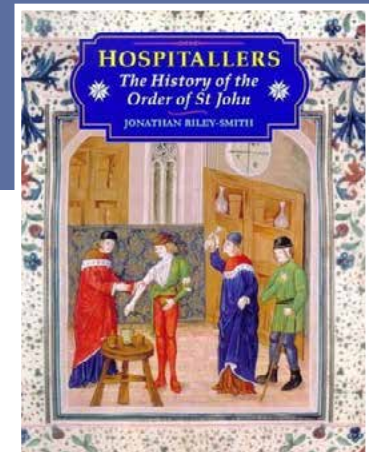
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Book review

Hospitallers. The History of the Order of St John

Jonathan Riley-Smith. Hambledon & London, UK, 1999



Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John was written by Jonathan Riley-Smith (1938–2016), a distinguished historian of the Crusades and a senior professor of history at the University of Cambridge. It offers a comprehensive and richly illustrated account of one of medieval Europe's most enduring and influential military-religious orders. Drawing on his extensive expertise as a historian of the Crusades and his role as Librarian of the Order of St John, Riley-Smith provides readers with a nuanced understanding of the Hospitallers' evolution from their origins in Jerusalem in 1099 to their modern incarnation as a global humanitarian organisation.

The Hospitallers began as a charitable institution dedicated to providing care for

sick pilgrims in Jerusalem.

Riley-Smith, delves into the dual mission of the Hospitallers: providing

medical care to pilgrims and engaging in military defence of the Holy Land. The book highlights their significant role in the Crusades, particularly their defence of strategic fortresses like Krak des Chevaliers, and their exemplary nursing services. Following the loss of Jerusalem, the Order relocated to Cyprus and later to Rhodes, where they established a fortified base to resist Turkish advances. In 1530, they were granted Malta by Charles V, where

they continued their military and medical missions, notably surviving the Great Siege of 1565.

Riley-Smith's narrative traces this journey, highlighting key events and figures that shaped the Order's history. The book delves into the Hospitallers' dual identity as both warriors and caregivers, examining their military engagements and their contributions to medical care and charity. The text is complemented by over 100 colour and 75 black-and-white illustrations, including maps, manuscripts, and architectural photographs, enriching the reader's understanding of the Order's legacy.

Riley-Smith's position as a leading expert on the Crusades lends the book academic rigor and credibility. His analysis is grounded in extensive research, providing researchers with a nuanced understanding of the Order's political, religious, and social impact. The inclusion of numerous illustrations provides visual context to the historical narrative, making the book accessible to both scholars and general readers. The author adeptly balances the military and charitable aspects of the Hospitallers, offering a holistic view of their multifaceted role in history.

At 152 pages long, the book offers a succinct overview, which, while accessible, may leave readers seeking more in-depth analysis wanting. In addition, the focus primarily on the historical aspects of the Order, provides less emphasis on its modern-day activities and influence.

Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John is an informative and visually engaging resource for those interested in medieval history, the Crusades, and the development of religious military orders or the development of modern emergency medical services. Riley-Smith's expertise and the book's illustrative content make it a definitive guide to understanding of the legacy of the Hospitallers and a valuable addition to both academic libraries and personal collections.

From the Editor This book review comes to you as an edited combination of two ChatGPT reviews to demonstrate the power and/or limitations of Artificial Intelligence (AI). I'm hoping it doesn't read as I would ordinarily write which is much chattier than ChatGPT. If I had written this review, I would have said that this book would be a terrific resource for any St John Division to help with knowledge of the Order and its illustrations really complement the text. I would also have complimented Riley-Smith for his mention of the nuns and the role of women in the Order (pp 29, 43). Even though ChatGPT felt that its conciseness was a limitation, I felt there was a tremendous amount to learn from it and many members would benefit from its conciseness.

In 2026, we are hoping to run a Webinar on the 'Rewards and Pitfalls of AI with Historical Research' so watch out for further updates.



28th 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?

What the world owes historians’.

Looking back over my long life, I realise that I owe hugely to many people for the kind of chap I have become. Apart from my parents, wife and children, always the greatest influence in my life, I am enormously indebted for what I am to numerous friends, many of these Order of St John friends. Indeed, St John the institution has been profoundly important in determining the direction my life has taken. Grateful thanks, St John!

Similarly, in my 56 years as a practising historian I’ve been a debtor to many others: schoolteachers, university lecturers and tutors, academic supervisors, informants, archivists, librarians, editors and proof-readers, historical project sponsors, publishers, book-reviewers, conference organisers, and the authors of important books and journal articles of history that have influenced me as an historian. And again St John!

But is anyone an historiographical debtor to me? No, most definitely not! The same is not, however, true of historians collectively. Other people, the vast community of non-historians, the rest of the world indeed, owe them an enormous amount. How come? For these reasons, among others:

- helping humanity understand why things are the way they are
- uncovering the mysteries of the past that have always fascinated people
- showing the rest of the world what is myth and what is historical truth
- giving individuals, families, communities and nations a clearer understanding of who they are, where they have been, and where they might be heading
- providing other people with the opportunity of learning from the past so as previous mistakes are not repeated.

I was reminded of this recently when I read *The Armour of Light*, a 2023 novel by Ken Follett, a best-selling Welsh writer of historical fiction. I was most pleasantly surprised to see Follett’s dedication of his book, which reads as follows:

This book is dedicated to the historians. There are many thousands of them all over the world... They are relentless in their search for the truth. Without them we would not understand where we came from. And that would make it even more difficult to figure out where we are going.

Further, and as someone who has been much preoccupied with St John history during the last 45 years, and with interacting with other St John historians, I could also add this:

And many historians associated with the Most Venerable Order of St John and its fraternal Johannine Orders have beavered away creating a vast library of books, articles, seminar papers, PowerPoint presentations, pamphlets, brochures, newsletters and journals that historiographically investigate every conceivable aspect of the Orders of St John and their numerous Foundations and Establishments from every angle imaginable.

Yes, the world does owe much to historians. And the Orders of St John owe much to an accumulating legion of St John historians! Thank you to the St John historians for what you

do and thank you for your positive influence over my own historian's career!

In saying this, I will observe that St John history can never be completely written, or at least not until that unlikely time ahead when the Orders of St John will have ceased to exist. Meanwhile, St John history is somewhat like a continually woven tapestry that can never be wholly finished because the artists weaving it keep on adding to it. In addition, new artists are forever joining them and eventually taking over from them.

That did not seem to be the case when I began working for St John in 1980. As far as I could then tell, I was the only St John historian working in Australia; however, other St John historians were active elsewhere. For instance, Jonathan Riley-Smith was

well established in the UK. He had already published five books on the Crusades, though his greatest volumes, *The Oxford History of the Crusades* and *Hospitallers: The History of the Order of St John*, still lay ahead. In Canada Col. Strome Galloway was writing his 1983 centenary history, *The White Cross in Canada, 1883–1983*; and in New Zealand Dr Rex Wright-St Clair was at work on his 1985 centenary history, *St John in New Zealand 1885–1985*.

Gratifyingly, since that time, dozens of others have taken over from us. And so the history of the Johannine Order continues being written. 'St Johnnies' everywhere, now and in the future, are much indebted to them.

Dr Ian Howie-Willis

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Recent publications

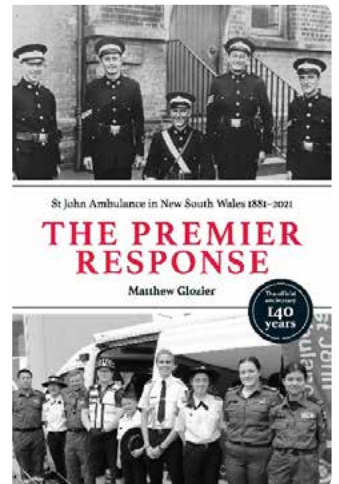
The Premier Response. St John Ambulance in New South Wales. 1881–2021. Dr Matthew Glozier, 2025.

The Premier Response 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 the 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.



Pre-order your copy TODAY: <https://premier-response.raiselysite.com/>

And also

Matthew Glozier has provided a link the St John Ambulance Tasmania: Selected reference works website. The site includes a list of recipients who were residing in Tasmania at the time that they were admitted to, or promoted within The Order—a terrific resource that may be of use to some local historians

Click here <<https://sites.google.com/view/orderofstjohnntas/home>> to explore.

One St John Volume 10 (2025/2026)

Matthew Glozier, continues to seek articles for Vol. 10 (2025/2026) *One St John. Women and the Order* (medieval, modern, future) and would encourage research papers on the following topics:

- earliest Serving Sisters
- first Royal women members in the 1870s and '80s
- the Nursing Cadet movement
- Matrons and Sisters of the Eye Hospital
- VOSJ: one of the earliest honours available to ladies
- the Linen Guild
- female saint of the Knights Hospitaller
- the significance of Edwina Mountbatten.

So many possibilities and lots of potential.

We remind you again that Matthew has been working on a complete bibliography of international, national, state and local histories—St John Ambulance published histories—National and State/Territory. Ian Howie-Willis was recently able to add some to this list and they have been loaded to the Historical Society website under 'Library': <https://history.stjohn.org.au/>

✱—————

Membership for 2025

We remind you to renew your Historical Society membership subscription for 2025 if you wish to continue your benefits as a member.

You will find our new online membership website where you can check your membership information and pay your membership fees: <https://sjaa25.tidyhq.com/>

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.

And finally ...

The next 2025 issue (No 2025–3) will be out in early December, with a deadline for contributions by November 10. Without your contributions of letters, articles, and historical ideas *PU* would not be nearly as interesting as it is. Thank you.

Dr Elizabeth Ellis OStJ

Editor, *Pro Utilitate*

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St John National November events and meetings

Saturday 22 November 2025 — day events

Venue: **East Hotel**, 69 Canberra Avenue, Griffith

7.00–8.30 am Centenary of Youth Breakfast (registration & ticketed event)

9.00 am–3.00 pm St John Historical Society Annual Seminar (registration & ticketed event)

9.00 am–3.00 pm National meetings

3.30 pm–5.00 pm St John Collaborative Session

Registration and ticket purchase:

- Centenary of Youth Breakfast <https://www.trybooking.com/DDONA>
- St John Historical Society <https://www.trybooking.com/DDNLJ>

Saturday 22 November 2025—Chancellor’s Dinner ‘Celebration of Centenary of Youth’*

Venue: **Hyatt Hotel**, 120 Commonwealth Avenue, Canberra

6.30–11.30 pm Pre-dinner drinks followed by the Chancellor’s Dinner

Registration and ticket purchase:

- <https://www.trybooking.com/DDLUZ>

*Please book early! Tickets are limited with a maximum capacity of 130 guests

Sunday 23 November—Annual Priory Church Service and Chapter

Venue: St Paul’s Anglican Church, 70 Canberra Avenue, Griffith

9.00–10.30 am Priory Church service

11.30 am–12.30 pm Priory Chapter meeting

- RSVP Priory Church service and Chapter meeting: priory@stjohn.org.au

Chapter papers will be distributed 3 weeks before the meeting.

Accommodation

- **East Hotel** (69 Canberra Avenue, Griffith). To book, call (02 6295 6925) or email (stay@easthotel.com.au), by Thursday 30 October, and reference the code ‘STJOHN’.
- **Hyatt Hotel Canberra website** (120 Commonwealth Avenue, Canberra). Click on ‘Book’ (top right corner), and check the ‘Special offer code’ and enter ‘BQTS’, or call 02 6270 1234.

Photos from the Lord Prior's travels in May

The Dublin visit



Unveiling a plaque at St John Headquarters.



At Kilmainham Hospital site of the original Priory.



At Guinness Brewery, site of the first St John Irish Brigade.

In Gibraltar



Mayoral reception.



Investiture with Cadets



Explaining St John International.

In Malta



With religious relics from Rhodes in the CoCathedral of St John, Valetta.



Having fun with cadets at Fort Madeliena.



And a personal favourite: our son, Michael, carried the Lord Prior's banner at the special Investiture at the time of the Alliance meetings in London.