



# Pro Utilitate

Preserving and promoting the St John heritage.

## Newsletter of The St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia

### Issue 2025/3

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## From the Editor

The Priory of Australia hosted the Grand Council meetings of the International Order of St John in Canberra in September, 2025. We can be very proud of the outstanding job that the Australian Priory did, hosting this important meeting for the many overseas visitors and the Western Australian Commandry.

Throughout the year, the Centenary of the Cadet movement here in Australia has been celebrated with events at local, state, territory, and national levels. We celebrated this milestone during our Annual Seminar in November. We also acknowledge in our honours and awards sections some members who have a long history with St John since being cadets or who have contributed to the Youth Movement.

2025 marks 60 years since the end of World War II and it is important to acknowledge the special contribution that members of St John played during those difficult years and are still making in conflict areas particularly in the Middle East now.

**Dr Elizabeth Ellis**

## President's Message

Thanks to everyone who contributed to making the 27th Annual Historical Society Seminar a real success. We were honoured by the presence of the Lord Prior, Mark Compton, who delivered a fitting oration to celebrate the centenary of Cadets in Australia. The seminar followed the theme of Cadets/Youth, and we were impressed by the papers delivered by two Cadets. The first, Samritha Bharanidharan from the NT, spoke to her paper 'The legacy of women in the Ancient Order. Daniel Won from Victoria presented on the history of the ophthalmic branch in Victoria. The engagement from the Youth team was at all levels (including the National Youth Officer Dr Felix Ho who chaired a session) We hope that more young members are willing to delve into a history topic for future seminars. The Knowledge of the Order proficiency badge is another important way to introduce Cadets to the history of our organisation, and they can nominate for the KOTO Prize

(kindly sponsored by the Lord Prior), by doing some project work.

My personal and sincere thanks to Stephen Szabo and Elizabeth Ellis for organising the seminar; Kylie Seidel and Gab Lhuede for amazing AO support; and Shane Bollard for the IT and livestreaming. None of this would be possible without the generous support of the national CEO, Brendan Maher.

In his oration, Prof Mark Compton said, 'young people who know the story are much more likely to own the mission'. We look forward to the 2026 seminar, where we will no doubt learn even more about the incredible story of the Order of St John.

**Dr David Fahey**

President



Left to right: The Lord Prior, Professor Mark Compton; Cadets Daniel Won and Samritha Bharanidharan, and Dr David Fahey, HS President.

## HSA website update

A big thanks to Teryn Edwards who has placed some more scanned publications from our Priory Library on the Historical Society's website, <https://history.stjohn.org.au/>. You will find the following titles under [<Library/St John Ambulance Association and Brigade Manuals>](#):

- *St John Ambulance Brigade. General Regulations of the St John Ambulance Brigade.* Revised 1931. London: St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, 1931.
- *Royal Charters* 1955 and 1974.
- *The St John Ambulance Brigade Australia. In-Service Training Manual.* [Place unknown]: Standard Publishing House Pty. Ltd., 1983.

- *St John Ambulance Brigade Australia. Regulations General and Dress.* 1984.
- *St John Ambulance Australia Operations Branch. General Regulations.* Edited by Lynne Macdonald. Melbourne: St John Ambulance Australia Operations Branch, 1990. Printed by Impact Printing. ISSN 1035-2228.
- *St John Ambulance Australia Operations Branch. Dress Regulations.* Edited by Barry Price. Revised 1994. [Place unknown]: Kingsway Printers Pty. Limited, 1994.
- *The Most Venerable Order of the Hospital of St John of Jerusalem. The St John (Ceremonial) Regulations 2022.* 2022. [Place unknown]: [publisher unknown].

## Awards and recognition

### Edited from St John NT

St John NT congratulates Dr Felix Ho ASM OStJ and Ron Green BM ESM MStJ on their recognition at the 2026 NT Australian of the Year Awards. Felix was named Australian of the Year for his extraordinary medical and volunteer contributions, while Ron received the Local Hero Award for his fearless, selfless service protecting Territorians and supporting communities across Australia.

'Felix and Ron are shining examples of the spirit and dedication of St John NT volunteers', said Commissioner Warren Purse. 'Their commitment to saving lives is an inspiration and strengthens communities across the Territory. They show the incredible impact one

person can have when guided by empathy, courage, and service’.

Dr Felix Ho, a medical practitioner and long-serving volunteer, has devoted thousands of hours to providing healthcare in remote communities and leading the St John National Youth Program, equipping over 3,000 young people with life-saving skills.

‘It’s an honour to receive this recognition’, Felix said. ‘Every volunteer, leader, and young person I work with inspires me. Together, we make a real difference’.

Ron Green has devoted hundreds of volunteer hours to St John NT, the NT Fire and Rescue Service, and the NT Emergency Service. From his passionate leadership of St John NT’s youth, to fighting bushfires



Ron Green and Felix Ho.

across the southern states and Queensland, to selflessly protecting others in immediate danger, Ron’s courage has touched countless lives. ‘Volunteering alongside extraordinary people gives me the chance to support our community when it matters most, and I’m humbled to be recognised’, Ron said.



## Highlighting Cadet origins 1.

### David C Heard OAM KStJ

David was awarded an OAM in the recent King’s Birthday Awards (which we failed to include in the last issue of PU). So, we are now happy to provide a summary of some of his service particularly of interest in this special year recognising Cadets. The following has been provided by David himself.

Trying to precis 81 years into few paragraphs wasn’t going to work, so as it is the year to celebrate 100 years of cadets, I’ve limited my notes to those early years in St John. I joined the Colonel Light Gardens Cadet Division in May 1944 after my brother came home with this fabulous uniform (Grey flannelette, double breasted shirt with big silver buttons, long black pants with a white stripe and a tamashanta). The two gentlemen (Howard Hollands & Harry Engle) had such a way with us boys that a surprising number went on to become officers in St John.

I was fortunate to be included in the team which won the state title three times in a row and also managed to take out the Cadet individual one year. We were rostered out to various events with the Adult members, and on transferring to their division managed to convince

them to enter us ex cadets into the State competitions. We took out the title which entitled us to represent South Australia at the National competitions in Hobart. (There is a photo of the team on page 264 of Ian Howie Willis’s History of St John in SA).

I transferred to Murray Bridge in 1954 where the members seemed to think I must know a lot, and a I was dumped in the deep end as Divisional Officer, Superintendent and eventually Regional Superintendent. I was on steep learning curve, but managed to get the support of the 19 divisions I was responsible for. It was these fantastic volunteers that kept me committed for all these years and I would recommend any Cadet to get further involved into leadership positions.

**David Heard OAM KStJ**

## Highlighting Cadet origins 2.

### Anthony (Tony) Oxford ASM OAM FACPara MAIES awarded KStJ in Victoria

Tony Oxford has also had a long and distinguished career with St John Ambulance operationally but also has made a significant contribution forwarding the ideals of our Society.

One of Tony's ways for showing his Devotion to the Order and for all of St John Members around Australia was organising and leading two Historical Tours of Order sites overseas to places like Jerusalem, Acre, Cyprus, Rhodes, Malta, Rome, Amalfi, Scotland and London, in 2014 and 2017 both tours taking at least three years to organise. Bruce Caslake of Portland Division also assisted in the planning of these tours. These tours included building relationships with representatives of the Order in the locations visited as well as gaining recognition from the Australian Government for the attendees with afternoon tea at Australia House, London, in honour of St John and a cocktail party on the lawns of the Australian Ambassador's Residence in Jerusalem. St John Ambulance in Cyprus, Malta, Edinburgh and London also hosted the attendees as well as the St John Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. This has given at least 42 St John volunteers from all over Australia the chance to see first-hand the Order's long and proud history. (Edited from his citation for KStJ with permission,)

He has provided his memories of his beginnings as a Cadet which we have reproduced here with permission.

I joined St John in Darwin (Casuarina Combined Cadet Division) in November 1976. My prompt for joining was for many reasons; however my main recollection was the fact that mum was a single mother, recently divorced and she was a little worried about what we kids (I was 12) might get up to. The other reason was, whilst I made attempts at playing various sports, I was useless at them (unlike my brother Stuart who also joined St John later) and St John Cadets looked interesting.

Back then, we met in a demountable on what is now the current site of the St John NT Headquarters a Friday night. Jill Schoolmeester was the Divisional Superintendent then and Frank was Corp Staff Officer for Cadets. They were amazing leaders and great supporters of youth in St John. I worked towards my Preliminary First Aid Certificate, Home Nursing etc and in a short time attained the rank of Cadet Corporal having completed the NCO Course in November 1977. Shortly after, I was made Cadet

Sergeant. Some of the exciting things I did were; travelling to Melbourne (Yarra Junction), participating in the National Cadet Camp & Competitions at Douglas Donald Camp and travelling to Hobart as Cadet Leader to compete in another National Cadet Competition.

In about 1978/79, as senior cadets, we could work on the ambulances. I enjoyed the work with Casey Hoppe, Alan Caust, Bob Brennan, Mandy Langdon, and others who I have fond memories of. In 1979, when I was 15, Tim Rayner and I asked if we could do the Casualty Care & Transport (CC&T) course and while initially refused, ultimately, we were given the opportunity. We undertook the recruit course 2/79 and in November 1979, I was made an Ambulance Officer Grade 1 Volunteer Trainee Attendant. Due to our age, we were restricted on what duties we could do, but managed to get recognised and accepted, completing our on-road component and being awarded the CC&T certificate in July 1980. During this time, I also completed my Basic Rescue Course

## Highlighting Cadet origins 2. continued

with NT Emergency Services, qualifying on my 15th birthday (17 April 1979). Late in 1979, I recall being approached to crew up with Norm Turner to respond to a Priority Red (lights & sirens) for an attempted suicide and on arrival we were confronted with an injured 19-year-old female. As the attending officer, I promptly began treatment and can clearly recall the shock on her face looking at the young me and I am not sure who was more shocked.

In 1980, I was awarded the NT Cadet of the Year trophy for my achievements as a cadet. In April 1980, at 16, I was transferred to the Adult Division

(Casuarina) and seconded back to the Cadet Division as a Cadet Leader.

Reflecting back on my Cadet years, I recall one of my very first duties was the Queens visit in 1977 where I was placed on foot patrol with two adult members and we were given the task of following the Queen and party up the cordon to the Civic Centre where she unveiled the memorial plaque to the victims of Cyclone Tracy. I was also involved in the official opening of the St John NT Headquarters on 3rd April 1978 and laying of the Order of St John Clerkenwell Stone by His Excellency the Governor-General Sir Zelman.

## Coming event

### WEBINAR—Using AI in historical research

**Special guest speaker, Dr Keith Joiner, University of New South Wales**

**Dr Keith Joiner CSC, PhD, MSc, MMgmt, BEng(Aero), CPPD, CPEng, MAIPM, MIEAust** joined the Air Force in 1985 and became an aeronautical engineer, project manager, and teacher over a 30-year career before joining the University of New South Wales in 2015 as a senior lecturer in test and evaluation. He is additionally well versed in contemporary technology areas such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning and Cyber. As a keen researcher, academic and current Editor of *The ITEA Journal* (International Test and Evaluation Association), Keith is well versed on the use, impacts, pitfalls and considerations of using Artificial Intelligence to support the researching and production of suitable artefacts and texts for international publishing.

This webinar will provide advice for our members on the pitfalls and rewards of using AI in historical research.

If you have a specific question you would like Dr Joiner to answer, please email the History Secretary before the webinar, and our speaker will endeavour to have an answer for you during session.

**Date, time and log-on details will be confirmed in the new year.**

## Recent events

### Grand Council 2025

The Grand Council meeting of the Venerable Order was successfully held over a September week, in Canberra, . The Grand Council is the international meeting of the Venerable Order and included representatives from 14 Priories and 5 Associations, including the Commandery in Western Australia.



A Service and Investiture was held at St Paul's Church in Manuka.

### Welcome and Reception for HRH Princess Royal

On Saturday 8 November, the Lord Prior attended the Ceremonial Welcome for and Reception in the presence of Her Royal Highness the Princess Royal and Vice Admiral Sir Tim Laurence at Government House, Sydney. Two NSW Cadets of the Year and a Cadet Leader of the Year, as well as the two members on duty for the event, were privileged to meet and chat with Princess Anne and the Governor, Her Excellency Margaret Beasley. Also in attendance was Brigadier Peter Evans KStJ, the Former Commissioner of St John ACT who enjoyed a catch up with Prof. Mark Compton, Lord Prior.



The Lord Prior, and St John NSW Cadets



Brigadier Peter Evans and the Lord Prior

### St John NSW Annual Awards Ceremony at Macquarie Uni

On 16 November 2025, St John NSW celebrated and publicly recognised the extraordinary service of our members, as well as the remarkable actions of community members, emergency services personnel, and St John volunteers who provided lifesaving or life-sustaining first aid in challenging and often emergency situations. The awards were presented by Her Excellency The Honourable Margaret Beazley AC DStJ KC, Governor of New South Wales and Deputy Prior of St John NSW, on a truly memorable occasion and a

## Recent events continued

fitting way to honour the dedication and service of our members and members of the community.

We were especially pleased to welcome the President and Secretary of the Historical Society, who attended the ceremony to receive their St John Service Awards. Warm congratulations to David, on receiving your sixth bar to the Service Medal, and to Elizabeth, on receiving your first bar. Thank you both for your longstanding commitment and contribution to our organisation.

[John Ward, Director of Ceremonies, NSW](#)



Elizabeth and David, our favourite History Execs.

## St John Historical Society annual seminar

The Priory held its annual Church Service followed by Chapter, in Canberra on Sunday 23 November. As ever, these Sunday events were preceded, on Saturday, by the annual History Seminar.

Given that St John Ambulance Australia has spent this year celebrating and recognising 100 years of Cadets/Youth in Australia, so the History Seminar was devoted to papers on Cadets. And those papers were rich and varied. We were particularly delighted to have papers from Cadets themselves: one from Daniel Won (Vic.) and another from Samritha Bharandiharana (NT). In addition, our Lord Prior gave the first Historical Society Oration on St John Ambulance Cadets: Young people in service for faith and humanity—building stronger individuals, a resilient St John, and safer communities.

The Seminar was also the opportunity to present awards. Felix Ho, Chief Youth Officer, awarded the Sr Agnes Prize to Samritha Bharandiharana for her essay. And the Mark Compton Prize for excellence in work for the Knowledge of the Order Proficiency badge was awarded to (in absentia) Leila Najdi of Bankstown Cadet Division (NSW), and Eric Lu of the Hornsby Cadet Division (NSW).

The Seminar was livestreamed, and the edited video will be available online in the new year. The Abstract booklet has been placed on the History website, and can be viewed, [here](#). As well, *St John History* Volume 21 is now available on the website, [here](#).

We look forward to welcoming you all to the 28th Seminar in 2026.



Presenters at the 27th Annual History Seminar (left to right): Dr Elizabeth Ellis, Professor Mark Compton, Dr David Fahey, Samritha Bharandiharana, Professor John Pearn, Daniel Won, David Bromell, Anthony O'Reilly, Paul Copeland, Dr Ian Howie-Willis and Dr Matthew Glozier.

# The Oration Medal—St John Ambulance Australia Historical Society

In 2025, the Executive Committee of the St John Ambulance Historical Society of Australia implemented and commissioned an annual Oration of the Society—to be presented, by invitation, at the onset of the Annual Conference of the Society. The Executive Committee commissioned and designed the Oration Medal to be awarded to the orator, together with a formal Certificate.

The medal was designed by the Committee and features, on the obverse (the principle side), the centrum of the armorial bearings of the Order of St John. Approval for such portrayal was gladly given by the Chancellor and the Board of the Priory in Australia. The reverse of the Oration Medal features two sprigs of St John Wort, *Hypericum perforatum*; and a Latin motto, *Historia Esto Perpetua*, 'May history be preserved'. The medal is 24-karat gold-dipped.

The foundation medal was presented to the foundation Orator, the Lord Prior, Professor Mark Compton AM GCStJ, at the opening session of the Society's Annual conference held in Canberra on Saturday 22 November 2025.

**From the Editor:** A huge thank you to Prof John Pearn for initiating the idea of this medal and making all the arrangements to have it minted and ready for our Seminar. Congratulations John.

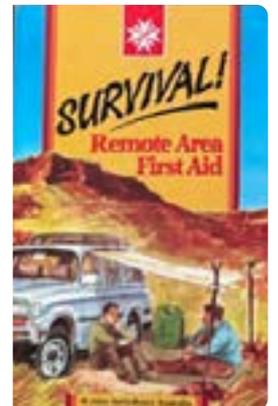


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## A blast from the past— *Survival! Remote Area First Aid*

Alan Caust was an ambulance paramedic when he joined the St John Ambulance Service in Darwin in 1978. The following is an introduction to Alan's story and his thinking process that led to the national publication, *Survival. Remote Area First Aid* (1991).

You can read Alan's full story on the History website: <https://history.stjohn.org.au/pro-utilitate-further-reading/>



It was a very hot afternoon. We were on the Barkly Highway in the NT travelling out to a major road accident. This usually involved many hours driving out, and subsequently, many hours driving back to the Tennant Creek Hospital, with often critically ill or seriously injured patients on board. These cases were often 'scary'. Insofar as being well-trained 'Paramedics' or 'Advanced Life Support' Officers (as we proudly referred to ourselves!), the tyranny of distance from medical aid, could often cost lives, simply due to time and distance alone.

Often, next to nothing had been done to treat and make comfortable these patients so far from medical/ambulance aid and assistance. At times, people died waiting for the ambulance to arrive! Something had to be done—and I was damn sure something would be done! I had read some years previously, the Presbyterian Minister the Rev. John Flynn's text *The Bushman's Companion* which was published in 1915 ...  
Alan R Caust OStJ, JP (Qual) Qld, RN (Rtd), MIAO (Aust) (Rtd)

# A story from Victoria:

## Honouring Dr James Edward Neild

*Pro Utilitate* 2019, Issue 4, November–December 2019, pages 12–15, had an article titled ‘The Neild Family Grave in the Melbourne General Cemetery’. It gave a brief summary of a presentation on the life of Dr James Edward Neild, the founder of St John Ambulance in Australia, that had been given at the quarterly meeting of St John Historical Society Victorian Branch. The presentation closed with a picture of his grave, which was an unmarked patch of dirt in the Melbourne General Cemetery.

The plot was a double grave, with Neild and his wife and oldest daughter on the right, and five other offspring on the left. The design of the memorial was a black granite tombstone centrally placed, with family member names seen from the foot end and Neild’s honorific seen from the head end.

The unmarked resting place of Dr JE Neild. Today a worthy memorial for Neild and his family.



On one side of the tombstone is a QR code which links to a biography of Neild on the Victorian St John website. Also, alongside the grave a small *Darwinia Neildiana* (Neild’s Scent Myrtle) bush was planted in his memory.

On Saturday 12 March 2022 a ceremony of rededication of the grave was held at the Melbourne General Cemetery.

Guests of Honour included Mrs Lynette Trad (great granddaughter of Dr Neild) together with her two daughters, Mr Cameron Oxley (Chancellor of the Order of St John in Australia), Bishop Richard Hurford (Sub-Prelate of the Order of St John), Reverend Jim Pilmer (Chaplain, OSJ Vic), Mr Gordon Botwright (CEO SJVic), Mr Rick Nugent (Deputy Commissioner of Police representing SJVic Board), Mr Robert Wilson (Registrar of Order Affairs Vic) with Standard-bearers and escorts, Dr Gerald Segal (Chairman of AMA Vic Heritage Committee), Dr Dominic Barbaro (Chairman of Medical Benevolent Society) and a number of senior members of the Order of St John.

In addition to the tributes given at the graveside, on the following day at the St John Museum, I gave a biographical presentation on the life of Dr Neild. There was a general feeling that after 116 years delay, we had finally given him the acknowledgment he deserved.

Allan Mawdsley OAM KStJ



Use the QR code to open the St John Vic website, and learn more about Neild, a remarkable early Victorian doctor.

# Museum of the Order of St John

## Newly launched catalogue

It is our great pleasure to announce that the Archive's catalogue is now live!

This is the result of an exciting two-year project to catalogue the founding records of St John Ambulance from c. 1870s–1939, funded through an Archives Revealed cataloguing grant from The National Archives, Pilgrim Trust, and The Wolfson Foundation. The project has brought to light never-before-seen records of St John Ambulance's early volunteer-led first aid movement, such as the original blueprints for the first 'St John Ambulance' litter, and records for 532 individual Divisions of the St John Ambulance Brigade in England and across the world.

The catalogue showcases the work and activities of the nation's most significant volunteer-led first aid organisation and the many thousands of men, women, and young people, who have volunteered their time in pursuit of the wellbeing, health, and support of others. From reports of patient treatment to equipment brochures, plans for first aid rooms and first aid manuals translated into a variety of languages, there is something to pique everyone's interest in this collection.

The Archive's catalogue is now freely and publicly accessible and searchable on our Collections Online platform, and we'd like to invite you to take some time to explore: <https://collectionsonline.museumstjohn.org.uk/browse-archive>

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

[www.museumstjohn.org.uk](http://www.museumstjohn.org.uk)

**Just a quick note from Anna Mason, Head of Collections & Public Engagement ...**

The Museum has been awarded a grant of £18,621 from AIM Museum Fundamentals funded by Pilgrim Trust and The Julia Rausing Trust. The funding is for a 12-month project starting this month, entitled 'First Aid on Camera: Preserving St John Ambulance's Photographic Collection'. The project will transform access to this significant collection and ensure its preservation for the future.

The collection includes approximately 25,000 photographic prints which document the charity's lifesaving work from the 1870s to the present. It includes international material that has only been partially catalogued. We look forward to making this more accessible to the international St John community and to benefitting from your knowledge and expertise when we get to creating enhanced records.

Home Themes

Museum of THE ORDER OF ST JOHN

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## Collections held by the St John Archive

The St John Archive preserves records from the present day which provide information on the personnel, and activities of the modern Order of international healthcare charity, St John Ambulance

The St John Archive comprises material relating to the modern Order of St John in England, the St John Ambulance Association (1877 - 1968), St John Ambulance Brigade (1888 - 1968), St John Ambulance (1968 - present), St John Ambulance Centres overseas, and collections of personal papers of individuals connected with St John.

A large proportion of the collection relates to the governance and activities of the St John Ambulance Association and St John Ambulance Brigade, with headquarters at St John's Gate, Clerkenwell, as well as the activities of the Centres and Brigade Divisions in the London and Kent area.

## The Challenge

In fact, two challenges from our Priory Librarian, Matthew Glozier:

What might this medallion have been awarded for?



And, who is this royal prince in Austrian uniform? And what St John badge is he wearing?

## The previous Challenge

A member enquired of the Victorian Museum whether anyone in the wider St John network knows the origins or story associated with this fireman's badge. I had no responses so if anyone has any clues on a second sighting, please send them in.



## Clinical history

### Eponymous airways — Part 2

#### Dr David Fahey

With the introduction of ether anaesthesia, it was recognised that the tongue and other tissues could obstruct the airway in a supine, unconscious patient.<sup>1</sup> A similar problem also exists in the unconscious patient in need of resuscitation. The invention of the Guedel airway<sup>2,3</sup> was a major advance in both anaesthesia and resuscitation, and its invention was described in the previous issue of *Pro Utilitate*. Two more eponymous airways are the subject of this article—those of Safar and Brook—both of which were inspired by the Guedel airway. Unfortunately, the Safar and Brook airways have all but disappeared from use.

#### Safar

Peter Josef Safar was born in 1924 in Vienna. His father was an ophthalmic surgeon, and his mother a paediatrician.<sup>4</sup> Peter longed to become a doctor, but aged 18 he was conscripted to serve in the German army during World War II, later stating 'Our generation was trapped... active resistance was suicidal...'.<sup>5</sup> Fortunately, Safar was prevented from being sent to the front lines due to his



## Clinical history continued

eczema—a condition which he deliberately worsened using tuberculin test ointment.<sup>4</sup> Instead, Peter was able to work as a medic where he witnessed firsthand the horrors of starvation, infection and trauma.<sup>4</sup> Safar did eventually graduate in medicine in 1949, and became interested in anesthesiology and critical care while working as an intern.<sup>4</sup> In 1949, he won a 12-month scholarship in surgery at Yale University in Connecticut, during which his interest in anaesthesia further increased.<sup>4</sup> Safar then settled in the USA, and married in 1950. He secured a place in the anesthesiology training program at the University of Pennsylvania Hospital, after which he worked in Peru, followed by Baltimore City Hospital, where he became the first academic head of anesthesiology.<sup>4</sup>

Safar devoted much of his professional life to resuscitation research. This began with a chance meeting with Dr James Elam in 1956 after an anaesthesiology conference. During the car ride home, Elam discussed his research with Safar, which showed that normal oxygenation could be maintained by expired air ventilation.<sup>6</sup> The life-saving potential of this technique was immediately obvious to Safar.

Safar devised and performed some truly courageous experiments—willing human volunteers were anaesthetised, paralysed, and submitted to artificial respiration by a range of techniques. Through these experiments, Safar demonstrated that mouth-to-mouth ventilation was effective, while the 'manual methods' were not.<sup>7,8,9</sup> The volunteers' willingness to participate was a mark of the esteem in which Safar was held, although Safar acknowledged in his later years that such experiments could never be repeated.<sup>10</sup>

Safar recognised that direct oral contact with a patient would be a barrier to rescuers being willing to perform mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, especially when vomit or blood was present. Safar also recognised the problem of airway obstruction in

unconscious patients.<sup>11</sup> To this end, in 1958, he devised an S-shaped tube by fastening two Guedel airways together.<sup>12</sup> An oval piece of soft rubber was placed across the join, to help achieve a seal over the mouth (this was later replaced by malleable plastic). By using different airway sizes, devices for adults and children were produced. The appropriately-sized airway was inserted into the patient, and the rescuer used the free end as a mouthpiece to blow into. This device became known as Safar's airway or Safar's Resusci-Tube.<sup>13</sup>



Safar's airway device, and the technique, a jaw thrust, for using the device.

Safar is frequently referred to as the 'father of CPR'<sup>10</sup> because he devised the 'ABC' initialism that facilitated widespread teaching of mouth-to-mouth ventilation, together with chest compressions. He was nominated three times for the Nobel Prize in medicine.

### Brook

Morris Brook (1911–1967) was a general practitioner who worked in Saskatoon, Canada. He was called to the scene of a mine collapse in 1957, where he attended to a patient, who was asphyxiated and not breathing, by administering mouth-to-mouth ventilation.<sup>14</sup> The victim was revived, however Morris Brook was quite affected by the amount of dirt, blood and vomit that he encountered during the resuscitation, and set about trying to find a solution.<sup>14</sup>



## Clinical history continued

The fact that Brook performed mouth-to-mouth ventilation at all (rather than one of the 'manual methods') suggests he was up-to-date with resuscitation, given that the technique had appeared in the medical literature only three years earlier.<sup>6</sup>

The Ambu self-inflating bag wasn't described in the literature until 1957, and Safar's airway until 1958,<sup>12</sup> so these devices would not have been available to Brook at the time of the mine accident.

Like Safar, Brook started with a Guedel airway as the basis of his design. To this, he added a mouth piece for the rescuer to blow into, and a rubber flange to fit over the mouth to help create a seal. The original design also included a suction catheter within the airway, through which the operator could apply suction intermittently by squeezing a hand bulb.<sup>15</sup>



Dr Morris Brook demonstrating his airway. This early prototype included a suction catheter.

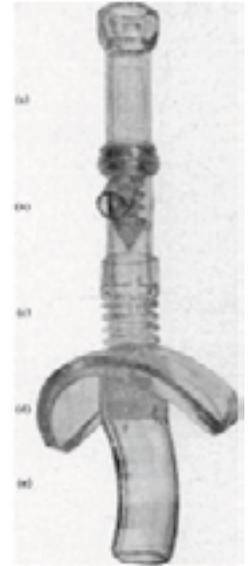
The one-way valve which diverted the patient's expired air away from the rescuer, was suggested by Dr Thomas Brook, Morris' brother, a GP who also attended the Saskatoon mine accident.<sup>16</sup> This device received a US patent in 1962.<sup>15</sup> Dr Upthegrove, head of anesthesiology in Saskatoon, trialled the device on over 200 patients, and stated that 'it works beautifully. It's absolutely the best thing out'.<sup>17</sup>

Subsequently, the design was modified to include a shorter oral airway (right) intended to 'neither reach the back of the throat to initiate a vomiting reflex nor impinge upon the epiglottis to obstruct the airway',<sup>16</sup> although one wonders if the airway

may have been made too short. The built-in suction catheter was also omitted.

## Conclusion

In order to maximise the chances that a victim of cardiac arrest will receive any attempt at resuscitation by a bystander layperson, mouth-to-mouth ventilation has recently been de-emphasised in favour of chest compressions only. Obviously this is problematic, because a supply of oxygen is, eventually, essential. Face shields and pocket masks do make the aesthetics of expired air resuscitation more acceptable, but they do not overcome the problem of airway obstruction—applying jaw thrust while achieving a mask seal is challenging enough—even for anaesthetists. It seems unfortunate that the Safar and Brook airways have fallen into disuse.

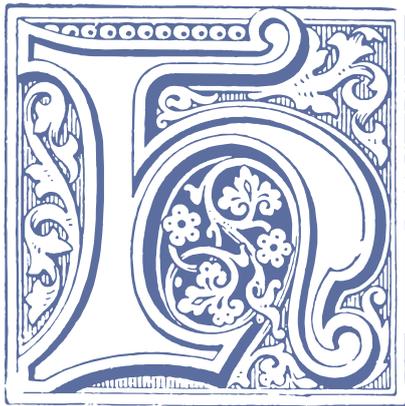


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## Clinical history continued

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29th 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?

### Learning from history.

Do we learn anything from history? If so, what does history teach? We can certainly learn from history, even if history itself really has no lessons to teach. Doesn't this seem contradictory? How can we learn from history if it doesn't teach us anything? The answer is that history doesn't teach but historians do, by interpreting to their readers what they themselves have learnt from history.

What have I learnt from history? Because I've spent most of the past 20 years researching and writing military history, what I've learnt is that the events I deal with are immensely sad. There's not much joy in military history. It's all so heart-wrenchingly horrible I wish it had never happened, that I might somehow have been able to intervene to prevent catastrophes like World Wars I and II from occurring.

Neither historians nor anyone else can 'unmake' history, however. Despite that, we live in the probably vain hope that nothing like the two World Wars of the 20th century will ever happen again.

One of the most famous quotes about history is that 'what we learn from history is that people don't learn from history'. Whoever said it first was probably borrowing from the great 19th century German philosopher of history, Georg WF Hegel (1770–1831), who wrote that 'what experience and history teach is this—that nations and governments have never learned anything from history, or acted upon any lessons they might have drawn from it'.

If we don't learn from history, why have I been pursuing it as a practising historian for the past 56 years? My answers can be found in various oft-repeated sayings about history. Here are several utterances by famous people that ring true for me:

## What is history? continued

'We are not makers of history. We are made by history.'—Martin Luther King Jr.

'The most effective way to destroy people is to deny and obliterate their own understanding of their history.'—George Orwell

'If you want the present to be different from the past, study the past.'—Baruch Spinoza

'If you don't know history, then you don't know anything. You are a leaf that doesn't know it is part of a tree.'—Michael Crichton

One of my favourite quotes about history is from a highly accomplished English historian—the great World War II Prime Minister, Winston Churchill. Whatever else my readers might think of Churchill, and many Australians are ambivalent about him, there's no denying he was a masterful historian and indeed one of only two historians ever to have won the Nobel Prize for Literature. He is well known for many of his eloquent, pithy sayings about history. This one must be among his best:

History with its flickering lamp stumbles along the trail of the past, trying to reconstruct its scenes, to revive its echoes, and kindle with pale gleams the passion of former days.

I don't know if Churchill himself consciously learned from history; but anyone who could write so eloquently and memorably about practising history had certainly learnt much about the nature of history.

As for me, my life has become a never-ending quest to know more about history and to learn from what other historians have said about it. Each time I open a book of history I know I'm about to learn much that I didn't previously know—even when the subject is familiar.

A case in point here is the most recently published book by our Priory Librarian, Dr Matthew Glozier. Its full title is *The Premier Response: St John Ambulance in New South Wales 1881–2021*. As the title suggests, it's the official history of St John in what New South Welshpersons like to call 'The Premier State'. It's a superb production; long overdue. I'm working my way through it carefully, learning much from each of its 317 pages of text. I realise that this milestone publication is going to set a new benchmark for future St John histories. Congratulations, Matthew! Long may you continue writing books like *The Premier Response* to teach us other St John historians about St John history!

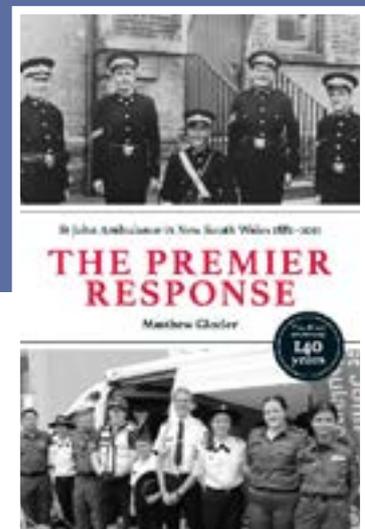
Dr Ian Howie-Willis KStJ

## Book review

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

Matthew Glozier. St John Ambulance NSW 2025

Matthew Glozier's milestone work, *The Premier Response: St John Ambulance in New South Wales 1881–2021*, is the long-awaited and much-delayed official history of St John Ambulance Australia (NSW). The author's fifth St John history, it establishes him as the current leading historian of the Most Venerable Order of St John, not only in Australia but worldwide.



## Book review continued

*The Premier Response* fills a huge gap in the historiography of St John Ambulance Australia. The void has been the lack of an official history of St John in NSW. Alone of the seven mainland State/Territory jurisdictions, until now NSW has been the only one not to have produced an official history.

Why that should have happened remains a mystery; but the possible reason is that until Dr Glozier happened along about eight years ago, NSW lacked someone with the historical imagination and professional training, together with the requisite historiographical, writing and book-publishing experience, plus the drive and determination, to ensure that such a history could be published.

As *The Premier Response* makes clear, NSW has often led the other St John jurisdictions in Australia. The book is not, however, a NSW boast. Instead, it focuses on the task of telling the NSW St John story simply, directly, chronologically as it happened. It takes readers on a guided tour through 140 years of institutional growth and development that reflect wider Australian history during that time. Thus, we watch the establishment of NSW's first permanent St John organisation, the Sydney Centre of the St John Ambulance Association (nowadays called Training Branch), during the onset of the great Australia-wide depression of the 1890s. We then witness the emergence of Australia's earliest St John Ambulance Brigade divisions soon after Federation. We see the trained first aiders join the Field Ambulances of the Army Medical Corps at the outbreak of World War I and then be shipped off to horrendous overseas battlefields from which some did not return. Then came the great 'Spanish Flu' pandemic of 1918–1920, the death toll of which made the recent Covid19 episode look like little more than a case of short-lived national sniffles. Among the victims were St John people volunteering at the emergency hospitals set up to try to manage the huge caseload.

The chapter dealing with the inter-war years, the 1920s and 30s, is headed 'The Golden Years'. Readers might be surprised at the choice of that title because, after all, that was the era of the Great Depression, when the unemployment rate in NSW soared to 32 per cent by mid-1932. The truth was that hard times brought out the best in Australians. They volunteered like never before because they knew that many fellow citizens were doing it tough and needed their help. Much the same proved true in World War II as well. The public trained in first aid and joined Brigade divisions in huge numbers because they saw that as their civic and patriotic duty when they themselves could not join the armed services.

*The Premier Response* then takes readers through the period of post-war recovery and growth during the 1960s and 70s, into the 80s and 90s, and beyond into the present century with all its challenges and uncertainties. In concluding his gripping account of 140 years of St John activity in NSW, Dr Glozier observes that 'from that initial first aid class in Redfern in 1881 through to this day St John in NSW has continued to expand exponentially hand-in-hand with innovative development based on the enthusiastic commitment of its volunteers and the effective leadership of generations of philanthropically inclined men and women'.

*The Premier Response* is an astonishingly detailed chronology. I am amazed by how much information it packs into its 317 pages of text. That, however, does not mean it is a dreary parade of dry facts. To the contrary, I purposely used the descriptor 'gripping' in the previous paragraph because unlike many commemorative institutional histories, *The Premier Response* is a 'page-turner'—the kind of beautifully written book a reader finds hard to put down.

I will conclude this review by saying that this is among the most important of the very many histories of the Most Venerable

## Book review continued

Order produced over the past 60 years. It is one to grace the shelves of every St John history enthusiast; and it is sure to remain an authoritative reference on the Order for decades to come.

Ian Howie-Willis (sometime St John historian)

## Recent publications

*The Premier Response* was formally launched at the Historical Seminar on 22 November, by Sean McGuiness, Chair of St John NSW

This book is a thorough and investigative look at the 140-year history of St John Ambulance in Sydney, going right back to the initial first aid class and the creation of a St John Ambulance Brigade. Written by our very own

Hon. Archivist and Librarian, Dr Matthew Glozier—honouring and keeping the history of St John alive.

*The Premier Response* is on sale now and ready for delivery. [Order your copy here.](#)



Matthew signing copies of *The Premier Response*.

*The Last Turcopolier: Richard Shelley and the End of the English Languge of the Order of St John, 1540-1589* is a fascinating article by our new Priory Dean, Dr Andreas Loewe CStJ FRHistS. Dr Loewe also presented at the recent 27th History Seminar on 22 November.

The article is currently submitted for review by the publisher. You can read the Abstract or download a PDF via this link: [https://www.academia.edu/144825015/The\\_Last\\_Turcopolier\\_Richard\\_Shelley\\_and\\_the\\_End\\_of\\_the\\_English\\_Languge\\_of\\_the\\_Order\\_of\\_St\\_John\\_1540\\_1589](https://www.academia.edu/144825015/The_Last_Turcopolier_Richard_Shelley_and_the_End_of_the_English_Languge_of_the_Order_of_St_John_1540_1589)

## From the Australian Office

We're excited to announce the launch of our new St John website: <https://stjohn.org.au/>! The website is designed to give visitors a modern, engaging and user-friendly experience.



The refreshed site connects directly to our state and territory organisations, makes it easy to access our online shop, and offers an uplifted view of fact sheets so that people can readily find the information they need quickly and clearly.

The project was a true team effort. The National Brand and Communications Team, Digital Transformation Team, and Creative Agency Blink worked together, gaining valuable insights and content from all Australian Office teams along the way. Together, we've created a website that better reflects who we are today and supports the communities we serve, and which proudly showcases our new-look shared brand identity.

There is a direct link to the Historical Society Website at <https://stjohn.org.au/who-we-are/history/>

## And also

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

- 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.

## 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](mailto: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!

## Membership for 2025/26

We remind you to renew your Historical Society membership subscription for 2025/26 if you wish to continue your benefits as a member. Membership is now current for the *financial* year and *not* the calendar year. 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 financial member, you receive three issues of *Pro Utilitate*, a copy of *St John History*, discounted attendance fee for the Seminar and access to a wealth of information on the ancient and modern history of our international organisation.

## And finally ...

The next 2026 issue (No 2026-1) will be out in early May, with a deadline for contributions by April 10. Without your contributions of letters, articles, and historical ideas the PU would not be nearly as interesting as it is.

And finally, a very safe and happy festive season to you and your families.

**Dr Elizabeth Ellis OStJ**

**Editor, *Pro Utilitate***

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