



ST JOHN AMBULANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

Preserving and promoting the St John heritage

FROM THE ST JOHN AUSTRALIA NATIONAL MUSEUM

From the collection of memorabilia of Reuter Emerich Roth (1858–1924),
Inaugural Chief Medical Officer, New South Wales Association, 1901–?.

Kindly donated to the Priory Headquarters of St John Ambulance Australia by Roth's grand-daughter, Dauna Currie of Saint Helena, California.

Reuter Emerich Roth (1858–1924) was a physician who was prominent in helping establish the New South Wales Centre of the St John Ambulance Association (First Aid Training) and the New South Wales District of the St John Ambulance Brigade (Event Health Services). He was born in Brighton, England to a Hungarian refugee father and an English mother. He came to Australia in 1883, and set up practice in Sydney.

After the formation of the New South Wales Centre of the Association in 1890, Roth was one of the panel of medical practitioners who regularly lectured the Association's public classes in first aid. At that time a first aid course extended across 12 weeks, with a weekly two-hour lecture and practice session. Lecturers and the members of their classes often formed close bonds during that period, as some items among the Roth Memorabilia attest. Roth seems to have lectured for the Association throughout the 1890s.

When the New South Wales Association Centre decided to form a District of the Brigade in 1901, Roth was chosen to be the Brigade's inaugural Medical Officer-in-Chief. He was one of the four senior officers appointed to bring the Brigade into being in New South Wales, the others being Lieutenant-Colonel Thomas Samuel Parrott (Commissioner), Major John Henry Alexander Lee (Deputy Commissioner) and Captain George Lane Mullins, (Chief Superintendent). The position of Medical Officer-in-Chief was later named District Surgeon, later still District Medical Officer, and in 2000 State Medical Officer. As well as being Medical Officer in Chief for the Brigade, Roth chaired the Executive Committee of the Association Centre for a number of years.

Roth's outstanding work for both the Association and the Brigade was acknowledged with the award of membership of the Order of St John. He was made a Knight of Grace of the Order, becoming one of the first St John Ambulance workers in Australia to achieve that honour, which was then very rare in this country.

Roth probably owed his appointment as the Brigade's Medical Officer-in-Chief to both his reputation as an excellent lecturer in first aid and to his career as an army medical officer. Before emigrating to Australia, he had served with voluntary army units in London, where he had become interested in military medicine. In 1894 he was appointed Captain in the Medical Corps of the New South Wales military forces. He went to South Africa with the first New South Wales troops sent to the Boer War in 1899. He spent 18 months there, was Mentioned in Despatches and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order. After returning to Sydney in April 1901 he became the principal army medical officer for New South Wales. He lectured in anatomy, physiology and hygiene in Sydney's teacher training and technical colleges for many years, then in 1909 was appointed medical inspector of the Department of Public Instruction. As well as his St John Ambulance involvements, he was a co-founder of the State branches of the Royal Life Saving Society and the Red Cross. In 1915 he became lieutenant-colonel in

charge of the 5th Field Ambulance of the Australian Army Medical Corps at Gallipoli. He later served in France. After being wounded there in the battle of Fromelles, he was invalided back to Australia. (source: *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 11, Melbourne University Press, 1988, pp. 462–63.)

Honours and Awards of Brigadier-General (Dr) Reuter Emerich Roth CMG DSO VD.

Dr Roth was the first New South Wales member of the Venerable Order of St John (1895).

Bars and miniature medals In order, left to right:

- The Most Distinguished Order of St Michael and St George [CMG]
- Distinguished Service Order [DSO]
- The Venerable Order of St John of Jerusalem (Knight of Grace) [KStJ]
- Queen's South Africa Medal with six clasps: Wittenbergen, Diamond Hill, Johannesburg, Driefontein
- Paardeberg, Cape Colony
- 1914–1915 Star
- WWI British War Medal
- WWI Victory Medal (with Mentioned in Despatches Oak Leaf)
- Colonial Auxiliary Forces Officers' Decoration [VD]
- Officier de l'instruction publique (Order of Academic Palms: France)



Roth memorabilia in the St John Australian Priory Museum



Waterford Crystal decanters, with silver handle, pourer and lid.

This pair of crystal decanters would have been presented to Roth by the members of one of his industrial first aid classes (i.e. a class conducted for a particular firm) in appreciation of his tuition.



Inscription on inside of lid reads:

FROM N.S.W.F.F.&I. CO.
AMBULANCE CLASS
16th Feb. 1898



Inscription on inside of lid reads:

FROM N.S.W.F.F.&I. CO.
AMBULANCE CLASS
16th Feb. 1898

On the top side of the lid is the Roth family's heraldic device, a gryphon, and Latin motto, *Spero Meliori* (I hope for better things).



Pair of silver candelabra

Inscription on the base of each candelabra reads:

DR REUTER E. ROTH
 FROM HIS AMBULANCE CLASS
 METROPOLITAN FIRE BRIGADE
 Sydney, 11th May 1891



Pocket instrument kit

The kit comes in a small rounded metal box in a soft leather pouch with a draw-string. It contains a scalpel, probe, syringe and disinfectant flask.

Inscription on the lid of the kit reads:

REUTER E. ROTH
 FROM THE STAFF
 MED. GYM. DEPT
 18th March 1915



The 'Med. Gym. Dept would have been the Medical Gymnasium Department (i.e. physiotherapy unit) of one of the hospitals with which Roth was associated.



Silver platter

Inscription at the centre of the platter reads:

Dr Reuter Roth
A Token Of Good-Will
From the women of
St Mark's 'First Aid'
September 1897

Between the second and third lines of the inscription is the Roth family's heraldic device, a grphon, and Latin motto, *Spero Meliori* (I hope for better things).



An illuminated address — 1907



The address was presented to Roth on 13 June 1907 by the leading members of the Association Centre and Brigade District in New South Wales, 28 of whom signed it. At that time he was chairman of the Association Centre Executive Committee.

The address comes in a leather-bound, gold-embossed folder.



An illuminated address — 1922

The address was presented to Roth on 2 May 1922 by the leading office-holders of the Voluntary Aid Department of the Red Cross Society in New South Wales, 53 of whom signed it. It was presented to him following his resignation as Director of the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs).

The VADs were units of medical ancillaries formed under Red Cross auspices to support and supplement the work of the military medical services. Many St John Ambulance Brigade Divisions registered as VAD units during World Wars I and II. When on duty they wore the Red Cross rather than the Brigade uniform. In most States there was a high degree of connectedness between the Brigade and VADs.

The address comes in a leather-bound, gold-embossed folder.



Photographic portrait: Reuter Roth as a young man.



Photographic portrait: Reuter Roth in middle age.

