

## Western Australian Commissioners

by Dr Edith Khangure, OAM, DStJ.

### **Lt Col George Frederick McWilliams, JP, MLA, KStJ Assistant Commissioner 1904-07**



George Frederick McWilliams (1865-1907) was born in Geelong, Victoria. He completed his schooling in Cambridge and passed his junior examination there. He attended Melbourne University and, after a five year course of medical study, qualified in medicine in 1888. In all probability he would have been a student of James Neild, the founder of the Victorian St John Ambulance Centre.

In 1889, he came to Western Australia where he registered and practised as a doctor in York for a brief period. For a few months he travelled around the northern ports of the state and at Broome he entered the pearling trade. He was a first-class horseman and became a stockman in the country near Wyndham taking cattle all over the Gascoyne and Ashburton districts. With a party of Overlanders, he journeyed on horseback 3,600 km from Wyndham to Perth

where he eventually settled.

Dr McWilliams established a practice at number 2 Beaufort Street and also took up the position as outpatient physician in the Perth public hospital where he organised a welfare service for sick children of poor families.

In 1892 and in conjunction with Mr Matheson Henry Jacoby, he was instrumental in forming the St John Ambulance Association in Perth and became its inaugural Medical Director, giving first aid classes.

At this time, he also received a commission as Surgeon Captain to the West Australian Defence Force, and when hostilities commenced in South Africa, he offered himself for active service. He was the first volunteer accepted by the government. In 1900, the recently formed Council of the St John Ambulance Association granted him leave to serve in the Boer War.

In due course (with the rank of Major) he sailed with the first West Australian contingent in the SS 'Medic'. On his return to the state Sir John Forrest promoted Major McWilliams to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel, being second in command of the medical staff in W.A.

By May 1901 he was again Chairman of the Council of St John.

In 1902 he went to England as Medical Officer in charge of the contingent attending Edward VII's coronation. He made contact with the SJA headquarters at St Johns Gate in London and gained help and advice in regard to forming a SJA Brigade in Western Australia. When he returned to the state he continued with the planning for a Brigade whilst maintaining his medical work and other interests - he was an active sportsman, President of the Perth Cycling Club and Honorary Surgeon to the W.A. Turf club. His

first major achievement was a trial public duty to be held at the annual Royal agricultural show in September 1903.

In 1903 he entered parliament as a Member of the Legislative Assembly.

On 23 December 1904 the St John Ambulance Brigade was officially founded and, whilst still involved with the Association, Dr McWilliams became Assistant Commissioner of the Brigade.

On January 5, 1907 he was present when the 15<sup>th</sup> annual report of St John Ambulance Western Australia was presented but became unwell soon afterwards. After a short illness of seven days, later certified to be gastroenteritis and bronchopneumonia, he died on February 12<sup>th</sup> aged 42 years.

Dr McWilliams had become the leading medical figure in the early history of the St John Ambulance organisations in W.A. He was also the first of the Australian born and Australian trained doctors in the state to be admitted to the Order of St John as an Honorary Associate in 1906, and was to be promoted to a Knight of Grace. This award was made posthumously in 1907. There is no doubt that his death was a blow to the whole community and he was given a state funeral with full military honours.

Between 1907- 12, no WA Commissioners were appointed: WA affairs were monitored by Dr G Lane Mullins (NSW) who was Commissioner of Australia. He forwarded reports to Col CWB Bowdler and Maj Gen JC Dalton, who were the Commissioners of the Brigade Overseas in London.

## **Charles Alfred Bolton, OStJ**

### **Assistant Commissioner (Goldfields District) 1912-15**

Charles Bolton (1891-19??) was born in Essex, England. Nothing is known of his early years until he arrived in Western Australia early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He spent some time in Fremantle before moving to the goldfields. In 1908 he became Honorary Secretary to the Boulder Centre of St John Ambulance. As there was no brigade in the goldfields, he communicated with St John in Perth and London requesting the establishment of a division of the St John Ambulance Brigade at Boulder. The process commenced in 1907 but was not finalise for five years.

The Brigade commenced in 1912 with Bolton appointed as District Superintendent, with the promise of an early promotion to the rank of Assistant Commissioner.

Professionally, Bolton was a Chartered Secretary and was employed as General Secretary of the Chamber of Mines in Western Australia. He was active with the Institute of Mining Surveyors, becoming Honorary Secretary in 1914 and General Secretary a few weeks later, but attended only two meetings before joining the Australian Army Medical Corps in 1915 with the rank of Sergeant Major.

He was sent to London transferring to the general list of the AIF in 1917 as a quartermaster and promoted to Honorary Lieutenant.

Bolton received a medical discharge from the army in 1918. He received a silver war badge and certificate for his service along with the British War Medal and Victory Medal.

The Order of St John acknowledged Bolton's service with his admittance to the Order as an Honorary Associate in 1913 which later changed to the grade of Officer.

After his discharge, Bolton applied for civilian employment with the National Salvage Council, Department of the Surveyor General and Supply. We have no further information about him after 1918.

**Dr William Samuel Trethowan, OStJ  
Assistant Commissioner (Coastal District) 1912-1915.**



Dr William Trethowan (1860- 1929) was born at Creswick, Victoria. He was educated at Ballarat College and on leaving school worked on the family farm. He moved to Adelaide to work in a bank and, after 10 years, he had saved enough to commence a medical course which was his great ambition. At the age of 27 years, he went to Scotland and became a student at the Marischal College of the University of Aberdeen. In 1892, he graduated as the most distinguished student of his year and was awarded the John Murray gold medal for surgery.

Following a resident appointment at the West London hospital he returned to Australia becoming an assistant in the medical practice of Dr Daniel Kenny and Dr George McWilliams.

Both of these doctors were among the first group of eight lecturers in first aid when the St John Ambulance Association was inaugurated in Perth in 1892. They undoubtedly introduced him to the work of the St John Ambulance Association.

He was soon appointed as an Honorary Surgeon to the Perth Public Hospital, a position he held for 25 years. He would later be appointed to the Board of Management. Honorary Hospital appointments were highly respected as a measure of professional skill and status. In 1909 he was appointed as Honorary Surgeon to the Children's Hospital and later to the Home of Peace.

Further respect from his colleagues was exemplified by his election to the Council and later as president of the Western Australian branch of the British Medical Association.

In 1912 the new St John of God Hospital in Subiaco opened. He was involved with the design of the hospital and one of his innovations was the 'Trethowan Corners' where all corners were curved, so as to minimise dirt and germs. For over a quarter of a century he had a happy and much appreciated association with the St John of God Hospital. He was appointed as a lecturer in nursing. To the nurses, he became their family doctor, guide, philosopher and friend. He received the informal appellation of 'father of St John' – quite a degree of acceptance for a non-Catholic.

In March 1915 he resigned as Brigade Assistant Commissioner and enlisted with the Australian Imperial Force, subsequently leaving Australia with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian General Hospital. During the Gallipoli campaign he served at Lemnos and was later transferred to Egypt. His war service, like his service to his patients, was exemplary and distinguished. He returned to Australia with the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel and was appointed to the Board of the Repatriation Commission.

The high regard he enjoyed from both the public and his medical colleagues was demonstrated by his appointment to the Rottnest Island Board, and the great honour as a foundation fellow of the Australian College of Surgeons.

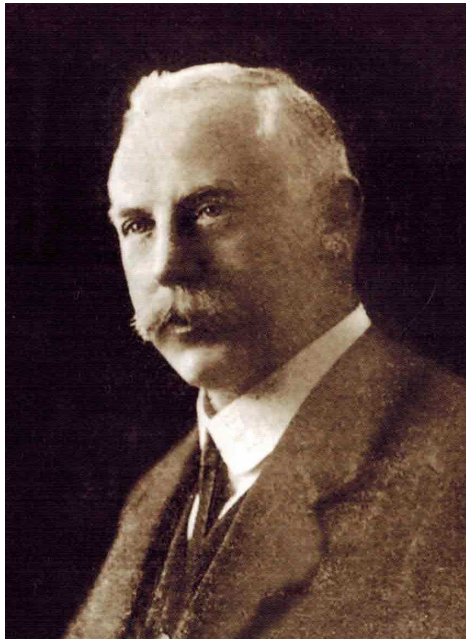
He was married, had a daughter and three sons. He was also very interested in sports and was both proficient and respected. He was president of the South Perth Golf Club and, as a keen yachtsman, became the Commodore of the Royal Perth Yacht Club.

Within St John Ambulance he held the office of President before becoming Assistant Commissioner of the Brigade. His service to St John was recognised with him becoming an Honorary Life Member and, in 1912, he was admitted to the Order of St John as an Officer.

We are grateful for his endeavours as one of the St John founders, who from small beginnings and by their altruistic dedication, played an enormous part in bringing the St John Ambulance Association to its current strength in Western Australia.

Dr Trethowan died on June 17, 1929. He set a magnificent example. Few could ever surpass the vast amount of honorary community service given so willingly in that era of medicine.

**Dr Herbert George Tymms, JP, KStJ**  
**Assistant Commissioner 1915-1928**  
**Commissioner 1928-1939**



Herbert George Tymms (1873 -1965). Nothing is known of his early years up to the time he qualified in medicine at the university of Melbourne in 1895. He then went to the United Kingdom for postgraduate study, obtaining his LRCP in 1899 and FRCS in 1901. After Boer War service he worked for 2 ½ years as Superintendent at a large English Hospital. Having married, he returned to Australia and took charge of the Rockhampton Hospital before his appointment in Perth in 1906 as the first Medical Superintendent of the Perth Public Hospital. He served for five years, making many improvements in all aspects of the hospital's administration and work.

In September 1911 he resigned as Medical Superintendent wishing to go into private practice. In the same year he entered the St John organisation joining the Council and becoming Chairman from 1912 to 1914. He became surgeon to the Perth Brigade Division in 1913 and Western Australian Assistant

Commissioner two years later. He was to remain as the Brigade's leader for 25 years, an unsurpassed Australian record. Under his leadership the Brigade began to prosper and by the end of the 1920s he had a district of 18 active divisions with 437 members. At his retirement in 1939. Brigade strength was 1072 members spread across 41 divisions.

On his retirement as Commissioner in 1939 he had served the Order of St John for a total of 28 years and was awarded the third bar to his Service Medal. Other honours were a Vellum Vote of Thanks from the Headquarters of the Association in London in 1914 for his first aid lecturing and examination of classes; admission to the Order in the grade of Associate in 1920 and promotion to Knight of Grace in 1923.

He came out of retirement in 1947 to serve as Hospitaller when the West Australian Commandery of the Order of St John was established – Dr Tymms was then aged 74 years, and served until 1952 when ill health forced him to retire again.

He was to remain a Vice Patron until his death in 1965.

**Lt Col John Ralph Donaldson, OBE, ED, KStJ  
Commissioner 1939-1959**



John Ralph Donaldson (1895-1985) was born in Victoria. He was educated at Trinity Grammar School, and, in 1912 entered Melbourne University to commence medical studies. He graduated in 1918.

On 3 April 1918 he enlisted in the Australian Imperial Forces and was appointed to a post at Caulfield Military Hospital until embarkation in July 1918. On arrival in the UK, he was appointed to the Sutton Vinny and the Louise Australian Detention camp. In May 1919 Dr Donaldson was given educational leave to take up a post at the Birmingham Children's Hospital. He returned to Melbourne in February 1920 and in 1921 migrated to Western Australia commencing private practice and, at the same time, becoming an Honorary Assistant Physician at the Perth Hospital. He re-joined active service in the reserve in 1924 and by 1932 was second in command of the 13th Field Ambulance and promoted to Lieutenant

Colonel. In 1940 he went overseas returning in 1941 but continuing to serve in Australia until 1944 when he transferred to the reserve list.

The start of Dr Donaldson's long career with St John Ambulance began on 21 July 1927 when he was appointed Divisional Surgeon of the Perth Nursing Division, a position he held until August 1936 when he was promoted to District Staff. On 31 December 1939 he was appointed Assistant Brigade Commissioner, becoming Commissioner in 1940 - a position he held until 1959. He also served on the Association Council from 1929 to 1947, the last four years as a Vice P. President. He relinquished this office when appointed as Director of Ambulance, Brigade Commissioner and Commandery Commissioner on 16 September 1946 holding all three offices concurrently. In 1959 he was appointed Commandery Lieutenant retiring from this position in 1969.

Dr Donaldson was granted Honorary Life Membership of the Association in 1942 in recognition of his services as a class lecturer, subsequently became an Officer in the Order of St John and was elevated to the rank of Knight of Grace in the Order of St John on 22 November 1945.

His awards included His Majesty's Coronation Medal in 1937, Efficiency Decoration received in 1942, Her Majesty's Coronation Medal awarded in 1953, and was admitted to the Order of the British Empire in the grade of Officer in 1960 for services rendered to the Order and to the community of Western Australia.

**Dr John Joseph Holland, CBE, KStJ  
Acting Commissioner 1941-1944**



John Joseph Holland (1876-1959) was born at Windsor in New South Wales. He attended the local parish school and then Saint Joseph's College from 1887 until 1894 when he entered the University of Sydney. In 1895 he had to leave University for financial reasons following the bank collapse which left his father destitute, but continued on a part-time basis qualifying in medicine soon after the turn of the century. Dr Holland came to Western Australia in 1907 and commenced practice at Kanowna, a flourishing goldfields town. Three years later he moved to the great southern agricultural town of Katanning and in 1914 came to Perth where he continued his general practice work until retiring in 1946. His interest in St John Ambulance commenced with first aid instruction and he joined the Council at the WA Head Centre in 1915, becoming a Brigade Divisional Surgeon in the same year. As Divisional Surgeon of the Perth No 1 division, he attended drills, delivered lectures, and created

much enthusiasm.

In 1932 Dr Holland was elected as President of the WA Head Centre serving for 16 years in this role, striving to improve the ambulance service for the sick and injured both in the metropolitan and the country centres of the state.

When Dr Donaldson left for war service in 1941, Dr Holland became acting Commissioner of the Brigade holding this post for three years until Dr Donaldson's return. In 1947 he was appointed as the first Commandery Lieutenant and continued his interest in St John until his death in 1959.

His membership of the Order of St John commenced when Dr Holland became an Honorary Associate in 1924, an Officer of the Order two years later, Commander in 1930, and Knight of Grace in 1934. In 1952, he was made a Commander of the Order of the British Empire for the invaluable service he had given to St John in Western Australia.

**Dr Bertram Clarence Cohen, KStJ**  
**Assistant Commissioner 1953-59**



Bertie Cohen (1895-1971) was born in Melbourne in 1895 but moved to Perth when he was 6 years old. He was educated at the Perth Boy's School and Perth Modern School excelling in his academic, sporting and army cadet activities.

During his school years he demonstrated an ability to instruct his fellow army cadets and members of his sports teams.

He was keen, alert and always showed initiative. As school captain he was capable of handling unpopular situations in a quiet and effective way; he was loyal to his school and had a level of integrity and honour his tutors all commented on.

In his spare time, he attended Rabbi Friedman's Hebrew school from 1905 to 1912 studying Jewish history, language, culture and religion.

He commenced medical studies in 1914 at the University of Melbourne holding an Ormond College

scholarship. He topped each year completing the course with honours in all subjects, including the prize in obstetrics and gynaecology. He was then nominated as a Rhodes Scholar.

After completing a year at the Melbourne Hospital, Dr Cohen returned to Western Australia becoming a junior resident medical officer at the Perth Public hospital.

In 1920 he entered private practice, originally in association with Drs Tymms and Holland. He remained a busy general practitioner for the rest of his life but also held appointments at many other hospitals and institutions. Professionally he was a member of the British Medical Association, became a member of Branch Council from 1953 to 1966 and President in 1965.

His other interests were varied.

He joined the Reserve Army Medical Corps and was an honorary Major AAMC Reserve during the Second World War.

His general community interest was directed to St John. He joined in 1923 and became an executive officer of the Brigade, reaching the rank of Assistant Commissioner from 1953 to 1959. He was also Commandery Director of Ambulance from 1959 to 1965.

St John acknowledged his outstanding service with a Vellum Vote of Thanks in 1933, an Honorary Life Membership, admission to the Order as an Associate Serving Brother in 1941, promotion to Associate Officer in 1949, Commander in 1954, and Knight of Grace in 1959.

Dr Cohen's interest in St John continued after his retirement in 1965. He started a book on the history of St John but sadly passed away before completion.

**Dr Alec Letts Dawkins, OBE, ED, KStJ  
Commissioner 1959 -1966**



Alec Dawkins (1905-1975) was born and raised in South Australia. He studied medicine at the University of Adelaide qualifying in 1928. After completing his residency at the Adelaide hospital, he went to London and Edinburgh for post graduate studies obtaining his FRCS in 1931 returning to the Adelaide Hospital. He was appointed as surgical clinical assistant and honorary assistant pathologist gaining his FRACS in 1935. In 1936 he went to Liverpool studying to obtain a masters of orthopaedic surgery before returning to Adelaide to practice as an orthopaedic surgeon in 1939.

He had been associated with the army since 1923 when he served in the militia gaining his commission as a lieutenant in 1926. In 1929 he transferred to the Australian Army Medical Corps as a captain and was promoted to major in 1939.

He served in many campaigns and achieved the rank of Brigadier in 1943. In 1945, on demobilisation, he remained on the Reserve of Officers and continued his military involvement when he became Honorary Colonel of the Western Australian University Regiment in 1961. He finally retired in 1968.

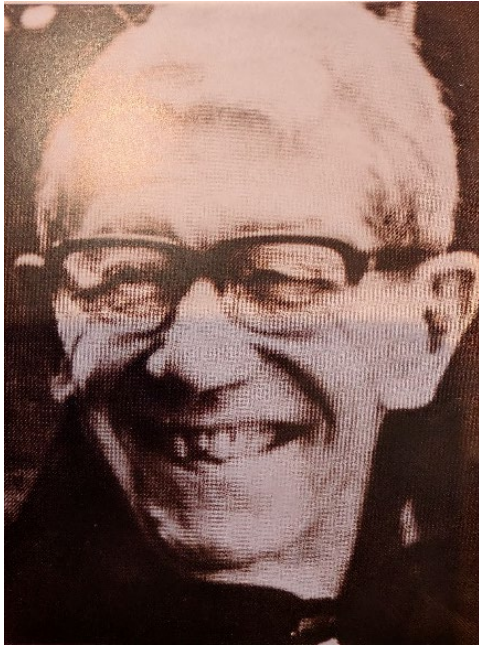
Having moved to Western Australia he held appointment at Royal Perth Hospital and the Princess Margaret Hospital for Children, becoming senior orthopaedic surgeon to both hospitals in 1953. In 1963 the orthopaedic department was formed at RPH and he served as its head until his retirement in 1965. He was actively involved in all aspects of orthopaedic surgery, training medical students, was a member of the board of the Children's Hospital, orthopaedic surgeon to the Department of repatriation and from 1946 senior orthopaedic surgeon until his retirement.

Dr Dawkins served on the Council of the British Medical Association (WA) and many other professional committees during his career.

He was an inspirational figure in the Order of St John commencing as a Divisional Surgeon in South Australia in 1932. After moving to Perth in 1939 he enrolled in St John WA. On his return from the army, he joined the Council of St John Ambulance from 1946 to 1949. He was President of the Council from 1949 to 1954 and Commissioner of the Brigade from 1958 to 1966. Between 1965 and 1969 he was Director of Ambulance and Commandery Commissioner in Western Australia. From 1969 to 1973 he was Commandery Lieutenant.

His service to the Order was recognised by admission as an Officer Brother in 1949 and promotion to Knight of Grace in 1959.

**Dr Lancelot Graham Bowser Cumpston, KStJ  
Commissioner 1966-1969**



Dr Cumpston (1902-1981) had a long and distinguished medical career, commencing at the Perth public hospital in 1928 before he moved into general practice in the goldfields

From 1941 to 1944, Dr Cumpston served as a Captain in the Australian Army Medical Corps and was promoted to Major when it was reconstituted after the war.

From 1938 to 1961, he served as an anaesthetist working at Royal Perth Hospital. He gave a vast amount of honorary medical service to all the major teaching hospitals in Perth and was still in active practice until he was 78 years old. His one hobby apart from his medical career was aviculture.

He was also known for his St John Ambulance Brigade work. He joined the brigade on 23<sup>rd</sup> of April 1940 as Divisional Surgeon to the Perth number two nursing division. He rose through the ranks to become

Corps Surgeon, a staff officer assisting the Commissioner from 1964-66, and District Commissioner from 24 June 1966.

When he retired as Commissioner in 1969, he took up the position of Secretary of the Commandery of the Order of St John from 1969 until 1978. In 1980 he became honorary Museum Curator and established a museum of St John Ambulance memorabilia.

For his continued dedication to the Order, he was admitted into the Order as a Serving Brother in 1960, was promoted to Officer Brother in 1964, Commander Brother in 1967 and Knight of Grace in 1976.

## Dr Alan Joseph King, KStJ, Commissioner 1969-72



Alan Joseph King (1911- 2011) was born and spent his early years in Melbourne. He was educated at Melbourne Grammar School and Melbourne University where he graduated in Medicine with honours in surgery.

On graduation, he had a term as Resident at the Perth hospital before his appointment as District Medical Officer, Resident Magistrate and Flying Doctor at Wyndham.

In 1939, he went to Edinburgh for postgraduate study.

He returned to Australia to join the 2/7<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance serving in the Western Desert, Greece and Crete gaining much experience with tuberculosis in the POW camps where he himself had become a prisoner. For these services he received the award of being Mentioned in Dispatches; and for his army service was decorated with the 1939 - 1945 star, the Africa Star, the Defence Medal, the Australian War

Service Medal and the Greek commemorative medal of the 1940- 41 campaign.

In 1947 he was appointed Tuberculosis Physician with the Public Health Department in Western Australia. In 1973 he became Commonwealth Director of Tuberculosis at Canberra but returned to Perth in 1976.

Dr King's involvement with St John Brigade District staff in Western Australia began in 1964 when he was appointed as a District Surgeon. In 1966 he became Deputy Commissioner and was promoted to Commissioner from 1969 - 72. He introduced the corps system administering six country and three metropolitan corps. He paid keen attention to the recruitment of cadets and to the financial straits of the Brigade at that time.

After retiring as Commissioner, he became Hospitaller and Almoner from 1972 to 1981, and then Commandery Commissioner and Director of Ambulance from 1981 to 1987.

Dr King was admitted to the Order of St John as an Officer in 1940, was promoted to Commander in 1958 and to Knight of Grace in 1971.

**Dr Noel Henry Maxwell Colyer, OBE, ED, KStJ  
Commissioner 1972-1977**



Noel Henry Maxwell Colyer (1916-1993/4) was born in Sydney and educated at NSW University. His medical interests lay in rheumatology but his other major interest was his association with the army. In 1958, he became Commander of the 5th Field Dressing Station. In 1966 he became Assistant Director of Medical Services with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

His association with St John Ambulance began in 1951 when he was invited to present a course of lectures in first aid at Armadale. Later that year the Armadale Serpentine Brigade division was registered.

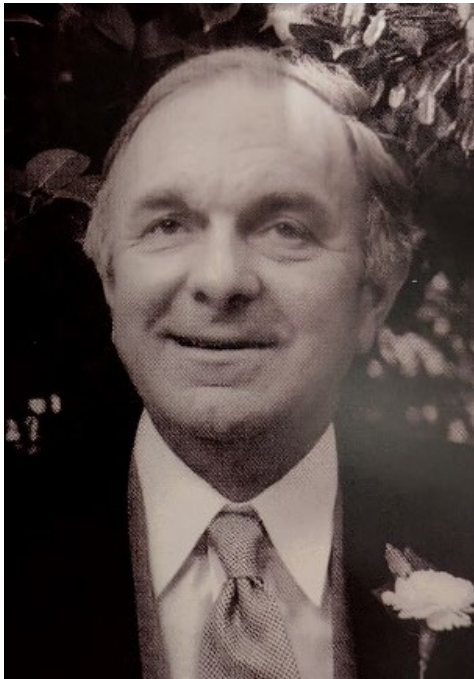
In 1972 Dr Colyer was appointed Brigade Commissioner. His responsibilities included presenting first aid competitions in a realistic setting and provide weekend accommodation for country members. This was achieved by using the old army camp at Point Walter. Another objective was to sustain a state of preparedness. This was tested when Cyclone Tracy struck Darwin. Over 80 Brigade

members volunteered for immediate service for that area and the Brigade conducted a first aid post at Guildford Airport, providing care for 2500 evacuees. In addition, Dr Colyer oversaw the arranging of the cadet jubilee celebrations in 1972, the staging of the Australian first aid competitions during the Priory meetings in 1974, and arranging a cadet camp for 400 interstate and overseas cadets in 1977.

Dr Colyer was a member of the St John Ambulance Association Council from 1969 to 1985. In that year he was promoted to Knight of Grace. He had also been the recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal and been awarded the St John Service Medal with three bars. Dr Colyer was awarded an MBE for services to medicine and the community in 1979.

He became Curator of the Commandery Museum, and in 1981 was appointed Commandery Hospitaller and Almoner. With a new compulsory retirement age of 72 years Dr Colyer was obliged to retire at the end of 1988.

**Dr Miles De Courcy Clarke, CStJ  
Commissioner 1977-1981**



Miles De Courcy Clarke (1929-2002) was born in South Perth, Western Australia. He was educated at South Perth primary school and Hale school. He studied medicine at the University of Adelaide, qualifying as a doctor in 1942 and went immediately into the Australian Army with the rank of Captain in the Medical Corps. He had a number of appointments and served predominantly in the South West Pacific area from 1943 to 1946.

After the war he returned to Perth and served for a brief period as the chief anaesthetist at the 110<sup>th</sup> Australian General Hospital which became the Repatriation General Hospital in 1947.

In 1946 Dr Clarke moved to Kalgoorlie and worked as a general practitioner there until 1957. One of the highlights there was the visit of Queen Elizabeth to the town in 1954. He was appointed as her Medical Officer.

In 1957 Dr Clarke returned to Perth, and worked at Royal Perth Hospital until 1985, when he retired. He became a member of the hospital board from 1973 to 1989. Throughout all of his working life in Western Australia Dr Clarke was very much involved with the British and later the Australian Medical Associations.

His service to St John began on the 4th February 1953 when he became Divisional Surgeon to Kalgoorlie No 1 Ambulance Division. When he returned to Perth, he took up the post of Divisional Surgeon to Perth No 1 Ambulance Division, holding this position until 1968 when he became a Staff Officer Grade 3. In 1970 he became District Surgeon Staff Officer Grade 2, and in 1972 was promoted to Assistant Brigade Commissioner. In 1973 he was a Staff Officer Grade 1, and became Commissioner in 1977 holding this position until 1981. Dr Clarke was awarded the Order of St John Service Medal in 1969, the first bar in 1974 and the second in 1979. He was admitted to the Order of St John as an Officer Brother in 1970 and promoted to Commander Brother in 1976.

Other first aid teaching interests of Dr Clarke have included the Australian Red Cross and in 1973 he was appointed Medical Advisor to their Training and Advisory Committee. His interest in the Returned Servicemen's League continued and he participated in many ANZAC Day parades.

**Wing Commander Ellis Rhys Griffiths, OBE, KStJ  
Commissioner 1981-1984**



Ellis Rhys Griffiths (1924-2001) was born in Wales. He was educated at Cardiff, Cambridge and London universities and graduated with his MBBS in 1947. He went on to specialise in surgery.

In 1951 he joined the Royal Air Force having the rank of Wing Commander and stayed for 16 years as a consultant surgeon in orthopaedic surgery. He served in the UK, Germany, and Arabia and was awarded an OBE (Military Division) for his service in South Yemen.

Dr Griffiths and his family emigrated to Western Australia in 1967. He joined St George Bedbrook at the spinal unit of the Royal Perth rehabilitation Hospital and was head of the spinal department from 1972 to 1989. Dr. Griffiths worked with Sir George for 24 years in what he described as a congenial and rewarding partnership. They became known to colleagues as 'Sir George and the Dragon'. Care of the disabled became a principal part of his work and

no effort was spared in the campaign to prevent spinal injuries and provide better treatment for the disabled of West Australia.

Dr Griffiths joined St John in 1968 as Divisional Surgeon for Perth No 1 Brigade Division and served until 1971. He was also an examiner for railway competitions during this time. He was appointed District Surgeon and held this position until 1976. He became Deputy Brigade Commissioner in 1977. From 1981 to 1984 he was Brigade Commissioner. From 1978 until 1989 Dr Griffiths was also a member of the Commandery Council including being Director of Ceremonies from 1984 to 1990. He was a member of Commander Executive from 1989 to 1990 when he retired after 22 years of exemplary service.

Dr Griffiths received his Order Service Medal in 1980 and first bar in 1985. He was admitted to the Order of St John as an Officer Brother in 1973, was promoted to Commander Brother in 1983 and in 1992 to Knight of Grace.

**Lt Col Robert Lyons Pearce, AM, RFD, JP, CStJ  
Commissioner 1984 – 1987 & Commandery Commissioner 1989-1990.**



Robert Lyons Pearce (1940-2020) was born in Queensland. He studied medicine at the University of Queensland, graduating in 1965. He chose to specialise in plastic surgery working in Queensland for five years, and from 1970 - 73 continued his medical studies in the United Kingdom.

Dr Pearce's service with St John commenced in Queensland in December 1969 and continued in the United Kingdom. He moved to Western Australia in 1973 and joined the Fremantle Sub Centre as Divisional Surgeon of the Fremantle Nursing Division. In 1981 he became District Surgeon and was promoted to acting Deputy Commissioner in July 1982 followed by Deputy Commissioner in 1983. He was made Brigade Commissioner from 1984 to 1987 and then became Commandery Commissioner until 1989. With the introduction of new Commandery regulations in 1989 he was District Commissioner until 1990.

Recognition of his service to St John has included a Commandery Commendation in 1979, the Order Service Medal in 1980 and subsequent bars. He was admitted to the Order as an Officer Brother in December 1983 and promoted to Commander Brother in 1990. Concurrent with his service to St John was his military service which commenced in 1973. For these services he was awarded a Reserve Force Decoration in 1988 and in 1990 he was named ANZAC of the year.

Giving so much of his free time, medical knowledge and skills to the community also resulted in Dr Pearce receiving the awards of a Perth Civic Medallion in 1987, an Advance Australia Award in 1989 and admission as a Member of the Order of Australia in 1991.

Other voluntary work which attracted Dr Pearce included the WA Branch of Aviation Medicine from 1973, becoming an honorary medical Officer for the City of Perth Surf Life Saving Club in 1977 and was on the World Lifesaving Medical panel in 1988. He had a strong interest in the Australian Sports Medicine Federation having been its WA secretary from 1979 to 1980 and vice president from 1985 to 1986. He became involved with the Save the Children Fund in 1989 and the Australian Agricultural Society in 1990. Dr Pearce became honorary French Consul for Western Australia in 1990.

Dr Pearce completed his triennium in 1990 as District Commissioner, having steered the Brigade through all the changes to becoming the Operations Branch.

**Bevan Francis McInerney, OAM, CStJ**  
**District Commissioner, 1990-1993**



The appointment of Bevan McInerney was a remarkable departure from the traditional practice of appointing Commissioners from the medical profession.

Bevan McInerney (1927-2022) was born at York in Western Australia. As a young man he joined the West Australian Government Railway Centre in 1943 and during his lifelong career with them served in clerical, administrative and managerial positions, obtaining Diplomas in Accounting and Transport Administration.

He joined the St John Ambulance Brigade in York in 1946. Over the years he moved to Coolgardie and Midland maintaining his St John interest at all times. He became a member of the executive committee of the Railway Centre in 1960, deputy chairman from 1981- 83 and chairman from 1984 to 1987. He was also a regular competitor in first aid competitions.

Mr McInerney was awarded life membership of the St John Ambulance Association in 1964, admitted to the Order of St John as a Serving Brother in 1975, and promoted to Officer Brother in 1977 and Commander Brother in 1984. He earned the Order Service Medal and six bars. For his service to St John and the community he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia in 1991.

Mr McInerney's appointment as District Superintendent in 1987 coincided with the national restructuring of St John. For WA this also meant changing from the traditional brown uniform to black. He planned for the simultaneous restructuring of the WA district office. Following this a review of the corps was undertaken and all records were computerised in 1990. He introduced a three- year plan and three- year budget coinciding with St John triennium appointments in June 1990. He became Commissioner in June 1990 retiring at the age of 65 in 1993. He left behind a legacy of a total restructure of district and corps staff, a new training program, formal job descriptions for district staff, corps superintendent and divisional superintendents, prepared the formation of an operation committee giving representation to medicine, women's affairs, operations, administration, and youth welfare and a motor vehicle policy committee to look after the needs of vehicle maintenance and replacement.

## Hazel Eve Goldacre, OStJ, District Commissioner 1993-97



Hazel Eve Goldacre (1933-2023) (nee Wannacott) was born in the United Kingdom. After training as a registered children's nurse, she also trained in mental health nursing. After emigrating with her family to Australia she worked in senior nursing positions in a number of Tasmanian and Victorian hospitals between 1969 and 1972.

From 1972 to 1975 she was a clinical instructor at the West Australian School of Nursing.

The years 1975 to 1979 saw her once again in the UK working in both government hospitals and private nursing, which included her own nursing home in Bournemouth from 1977 to 1979.

In August 1979 she returned to WA and recommenced at Royal Perth Hospital. Her service to St John began in the UK in 1975 when she joined the St John Ambulance Brigade and was appointed as Divisional Nursing Officer to the Prince of Wales

Division, Surbiton branch. For two years she taught first aid and home nursing courses and performed many local and city of London public duties,

When she returned to Australia, she resumed her interest in St John and in 1983 was appointed Divisional Nursing Officer to Morley Division. In 1985 an appointment as Corps Nursing Officer in no 2 Corps followed and in 1986, she was awarded her first chevron for service.

In June 1987, she was promoted to District Nursing Officer. Highlights of her work included the June 1987 Priory conference in Perth where she prepared and adjudicated pieces for the national competitions; the reorganisation of the first aid room at the Claremont Showgrounds and the establishment of a triage system for casualty management; attending the Priory conference in Hobart in 1988; and being appointed team manager for the competitions in Sydney in 1989 and Melbourne in 1990.

Following her appointment in 1987 as District Nursing Officer Mrs Goldacre was active in the recruitment of registered nurses. The 1990s saw her teaching at senior first aid level at WASON. In addition, she introduced new casualty report forms and taught advanced nursing skills assisting with an introduction of the new skills maintenance system and the new national syllabus of training. She also assisted with cadet and adult competitions in the Metropolitan area. From May 1990 Mrs Golder was given the responsibility of forming and running the new training cadre which included the establishment of new training centres at Morley and Melville, which provided the training for all Operations Branch members to advanced and medallion level. Her increasing role in the senior management of voluntary first aid services resulted in her being admitted to the Order of St John as an Officer Sister in 1992.

In June 1993 Hazel was appointed District Commissioner. Her time in the office saw an increased emphasis on the cadet movement within St John and recruitment programs were very successful. In June 1997 she retired.

**Dr Kenneth Ernest Collins, AM, CStJ**  
**District Commissioner 1997-2006**



Kenneth Collins (1936-2022) was born in Adelaide. He graduated in medicine from the University of Adelaide in 1959 and completed his residency at the Royal Adelaide Hospital in 1960. From 1961 to 1964 he served with the RAAF reaching the rank of Squadron Leader and being Senior Medical Officer at the Pearce base. Having retired from the air force he became a General Practitioner. In 1965, he commenced general practice in Cloverdale and from 1971 in Thornlie.

His community service was outstanding both in Western Australia and overseas. Largely through his involvement with Rotary International's health hunger and humanity programs Dr Collins gave much time to serve overseas on immunisation and other health programs from 1973. His district involvement followed in 1979, and one of his areas of interest was the Medic Alert Committee which he joined in 1980 becoming its chairman in 1989.

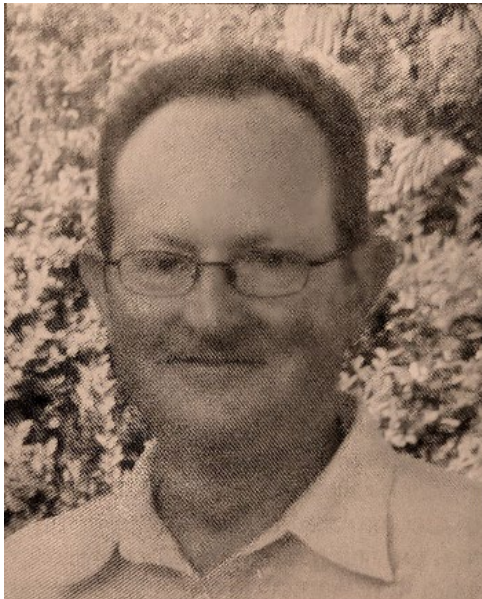
When the Priory Structure Review Committee made significant changes in the St John organisation in 1987, Dr Collins became a member of the Executive Committee, the St John Ambulance Australia WA Commandery Functions Committee, and the St John Ambulance Australia WA Operations Branch Committee.

Having been involved with St John since 1980, his administrative abilities and interest in community affairs were recognised with his appointment as District Commissioner in 1997.

He had joined St John Ambulance in 1996 as a Volunteer First Aider and followed this becoming a Member from December 1997. After completing two triennia as District Commissioner, he retired in 2006 and transferred to being a non-clinical member and also an affiliate in the state Operations Branch until his retirement in 2015.

Recognition of his outstanding community service was given with the presentation of some 20 awards, including the City of Gosnells Citizen of the Year, Western Australian Senior Citizen of the Year for Community Service, and, International ANZO Exemplary Rotarian in 1991. In 1994, he was appointed as a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to public health in Australia and Asia. In 2006 he was appointed a Commander of the Order of St John.

**Dr John van der Post, MStJ  
Commissioner 2006-08**



John van der Post (1962- 2024) was born in South Africa and studied medicine at the University of Cape Town between 1980 and 1985. He graduated with distinction and completed his internship at the Grootte Schuur Hospital in Cape Town. From 1987 to 1992 he studied in Edinburgh, Scotland, serving in various surgical Senior House Officer and Registrar positions which culminated in his FRCS(Edin) qualification.

He returned to South Africa to complete his training in orthopaedics but the deteriorating socio-political environment resulted in a move to New Zealand in 1994

From 1995 to 2002, he was Medical Director at the Ascot Accident and Medical Clinic and the Baycare Community Health Service, specialising in Accident & Medical practice.

Accident and Medical Practice was a New Zealand concept. It involved purpose-built facilities, incorporating clinical areas, in-house radiology and extended hours service. These facilities grew out of the need to provide efficient acute care at a level somewhere between that of traditional general practice and a hospital-based emergency department – the model of the future St John Urgent Care practices in WA.

In 2002 he moved to Western Australia & worked full-time at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital. From 2004 he worked part time at the emergency department of Joondalup Health Campus and with the WA Country Health Service working at Albany Health Campus and with the WACHS Emergency Telehealth Team.

John's involvement with St John Ambulance in W.A. commenced formally in 2005 when he commenced as a volunteer first aider before receiving a Warrant of Appointment as a State Professional Officer. His previous experiences including being a Company Director and pioneering work with Accident and Medical Practice led to him becoming Deputy Commissioner of EHS under Ken Collins' leadership, and then state Commissioner from 2006 to 2008. He then continued as a non-clinical member until 2010. He was a Board Member for five years from June 2006 until June 2011, and was also a member of the Medical Advisory Panel of St John for a number of years.

In 2006 he was admitted to the Order of St John as a Member.

Dr van der Post was the last Commissioner of the Brigade/EHS in WA.  
From June 2008, professional management has led this longstanding volunteer branch.