Introduction

I see the Fellowship’s contribution to the work of our worldwide Order growing in importance in the years ahead.

The new Fellowship International Newsletter will help to ensure that news of Fellowship initiatives becomes known more quickly than in the past.

I would like to thank Brigadier John Hemsley, Chairman of the Fellowship in the Priory of England and the Islands, for leading this initiative and James Nash, Esq for agreeing to be the first editor.

And finally, I invite all members to send in news of what you are doing.

Eric L. Barry  
Lord Prior, the Order of St John

Foreword

Over the past few years, it has become apparent that many Fellowship members from around the world feel they have lost contact with like-minded friends and contemporaries. Therefore, at the Grand Council Meeting in Edinburgh in May last year, it was decided that it would be a good idea if these links were to be restored or strengthened, initially by means of some form of official Newsletter. Clearly the best way of achieving closer links is through a periodic publication and, to get this off the ground, the Fellowship in the Priory of England volunteered to co-ordinate it to start with - volunteers please for next year!

The object of the Newsletter is to foster contacts between St John Fellowship members worldwide. Mr James Nash has kindly agreed to be the Editor and I should like to thank him enormously for the time and effort he has put into preparing this first edition. Also our gratitude goes to Marie O’Flanagan and David Summers at the St John Ambulance National Headquarters whose generous help and expertise has been invaluable in the final production.

John Hemsley  
Chairman of the Editorial Board
Dear Confreres,

Herewith our first shot at FELLOWSHIP LINK, your newsletter. It has taken some time to produce as, having been told the Fellowship was eager to have its world wide newsletter, there was a considerable shortage of world wide news coming to me, the grumpy old editor. Think how appallingly boring it would be if I had to write it all myself!

However, I have been rescued by the kind Hong Kong Chapter of the Ontario Fellowship, by Betty Nichol and John Hughes of the Commandery of Ards and by Terry Walton with wild tales of Western Australia, to say nothing of such old friends as the Hospitaller and Pamela Willis, the Museum curator. Thank you all very much.

FELLOWSHIP LINK will only work if you tell me what you want and send me a supply of news. I look forward to receiving brickbats, rhymes and tales of St John derring-do and anything that you think might appeal to your confreres around the world can be sent by email to: jgnash@btopenworld.com or by post to: James Nash 4 Wyatt Court Hinton St. George Somerset TA17 8SS

With all best wishes,

James Nash
Editor

Editor’s Introduction

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News from the Priory of England and the Islands

The St John Fellowship in the Priory has a membership of 3,174 spread over 139 branches, who, between them, gave 154,597 hours of service in 2006, either directly to St John or to their communities. I am told they also spent a further 44,732 in coffee mornings, get-togethers and other jollifications, which just shows that we wrinklies have not forgotten how to enjoy ourselves as well.

Over 400 members attended the twenty-fourth AGM on 24th May where they were thanked by the Priory hospitaller for their tremendous efforts in raising over £31,000 for the Eye Hospital in Jerusalem. It was a most successful weekend with a wide cross-section of membership present, from the Commandery of Ards to the Channel Islands. Indeed, there was representation from every region in the Priory. It is perhaps worth mentioning that, at a conservative estimate, this represented over 12,000 years of service to St John and mankind.
A brief history of the St John Fellowship

By John Hemsley

The St John Fellowship was formed on St John’s Day 1983. Until that time, the Order’s foundations had never had an old comrades association, although ad hoc groups of former members had been formed in some areas, often without any contact with the active foundation. Since, for many years, past members of St John Ambulance had been meeting socially and helping out the Ambulance on an informal basis, it was felt, particularly by the prime movers, Miss Sheila Puckle and General Peter Leuchars, that there was a need to create a formal St John ‘Comrades Association’.

In 1986, the Council of the Grand Priory agreed that the St John Fellowship should be recognised as a branch of the Order and should receive an annual subvention from the Council and become answerable to the Order for its governance. Its objectives were defined as:

1. Support for the charitable activities of the Order’s foundations.
2. Help for former members in need, especially the incapacitated, housebound and those in hospital and residential homes.
3. Enabling former members to keep in touch with St John and each other.
4. The formation of branches to organise social and charitable events and any other functions as they saw fit to support the Order’s foundations.

Membership was to be open to all those (over the age of 16) who had served or are serving the Order and its foundations and their families.

Since the reorganisation of the Order in 2000, the Fellowship has become a worldwide federation of separate bodies, each responsible to its own Priory or National Council. Branches are self-supporting and self-governing within whatever parameters are laid down by its Priory or National Council.

Since 1994, the Fellowship has been recognised as an operational arm of the Order in the same way as the foundations and has grown to some 224 branches worldwide helping out at major national occasions as well as care duties such as home visits, day outings for the elderly and shopping visits for the housebound etc. and, of course, fundraising.

This newsletter, which we hope to publish bi-annually, is being sent to all branches across the world and we hope they will respond with news and ideas for inclusion in the subsequent editions.

Jerusalem Eye Hospital

By Anthony Chignell

Order Hospitaller

This year marks the 125th Anniversary of the founding of our Hospital in Jerusalem. This gives us an opportunity to give thanks for all that has been done and to re dedicate ourselves towards trying to bring the work of the Hospital to a wider audience.

To celebrate our Anniversary, a piece of sculpture, made in Jerusalem and brought to London via Acre and Malta, was blessed by the Prelate of the Order at a simple ceremony at St John’s Gate and then received by the Grand Prior who in turn started its journey around the St John Priories by presenting it to the Prior of England. During the year it is hoped that the presence of this ‘icon’ will stimulate greater interest in the Hospital on its journey (it has already been to the USA).

The highlight of the year will be the celebrations centred around the Investiture and service of thanksgiving at the Hospital in May – it is good that so many members of the Fellowship will be present. The Fellowship has always been an important and productive supporter of the Hospital and we in our turn are very grateful for that support – in particular for the feeling of fellowship itself and all that means.
Jerusalem
By J Nash

This is the true city of God,
Where ritually naming his names
Absolves the believer’s meanness of heart
And saves bigots’ souls from the flames.

This is the true City of Peace,
Where man is less than old stones
And murder runs freely in alleys and streets
In feuds over doubtful saints’ bones.

This is the true City of Hope
That ignores the despair of the poor,
For Lazarus, lacking a government pass,
May not even approach Dives’ door.

This is the true City of Hate,
Obsessed with its creeds and its fears,
Where every new profession of faith
Brings forth only blood and more tears.

A shekel, Sir, a shekel, Lady,
For the Hospital, where grace and pity
Can still be found. Have you been there lately,
To the one sane place in this God mad City?
St John Ambulance in Hong Kong

The St John Ambulance Brigade in Hong Kong was founded in 1916 and celebrated its 90th anniversary last year. Most of the members of the Hong Kong Chapter in Ontario are former members of the St John Ambulance Brigade in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is an island, smaller in size than the City of Toronto, situated at the estuary of the Pearl River in the South China Sea, and the southern apex of the Kowloon Peninsula which extends north into mainland China. Just over 100 years ago, the boundary of the former British Colony was expanded north to include a leased land named New Territories. The lease expired in 1997 when the sovereignty of Hong Kong was returned to China. The current population is about eight to nine million.

Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese for three years and eight months and all pre-war Brigade records were destroyed. Hence, we can say very little about those pre-war years. The Brigade has its headquarters (which is in line with the provincial level in Canadian Brigade structure) on the island and it branches into two regions: the Hong Kong Island Region and the Mainland and New Territories Region.

St John Ambulance in Hong Kong has earned the respect of the people there in war and peace. It was mobilised in World War II and 55 members were confirmed to have given their lives in defence of Hong Kong. A monument has been erected in a public park to remember them. Every year, on Remembrance Sunday, a wreath laying ceremony is held there. The Brigade started the very first free ambulance service way back to 1947 when residents had to pay for the use of government run service other than accidental injuries. In addition the Brigade also provided community first aid service over the past decades.

The free ambulance service manned by volunteer Brigade members is still in operation today. It works side by side with the government ambulance service under the command of the local Fire Department during emergencies.

The Brigade has a dental clinic which provides dental treatments to ‘under privileged’ children at its district headquarters. I believe this facility is unique in the St John world. The clinic is staffed by Brigade officers and members who are practicing dentists and nurses. The clinic is open after office hours and on holidays.

The St John Ambulance Association

It runs parallel with the Brigade and is well recognized as one of the most prominent authorities to provide first aid and home care training to the public.
The St John Council for Hong Kong

The Council oversees the operations and well-being of both the Brigade and the Association. Before 1997, the governor of Hong Kong was the patron of the Council. Now the Chief Executive of Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong, the People’s Republic of China, is the Patron of the Council.

General

The establishment of the St John Ambulance is by statute. Discipline within the ranks is believed to have been the key element to the success and the continuity of the St John tradition. Every member understands his/her duties and the first day of enrollment and as years go by will develop a spirit of devotion and the loyalty to the organization. Most of the traditional events are quite similar to what we have in Canada, including first aid competitions.

However, there are interesting points that I like to mention about the competitions. For reason of impartiality in first aid competitions, whether it is inter-region or inter-division, the same panel of judges being Brigade surgeons or outside professionals is responsible to evaluate the performance of all competing teams. Each team is provided with a small quantity of preset first aid supplies and team members were encouraged to improvise with materials found at the scene. Waiting teams are segregated at a different supervised location until called.

Competitions at region level also include extra items like inspection of members’ uniforms, equipment, documentation and foot drill. The idea of having all these additional items is to encourage more participation of individual members to regional function and be able to enjoy and develop team spirit.

St John benefactors

Over the past years the Brigade in Hong Kong has always been blessed with strong support from leaders in the business sector. They have so much respect to objectives of the Brigade and chosen to serve it in a different way.

The Brigade has never run short of this type of enthusiastic individuals who accept appointment as Brigade presidents. They provide the Brigade with outstanding financial support which significantly improved its operations from divisional training equipment to team building activities. The establishment of the officers’ mess and members’ mess, one in each region and located in the regional headquarters, provide Brigade personnel a nice home base where they interact during leisure hours. Like many other successful enterprises, lots of innovative and intellectual ideas have been generated during these casual gatherings.

I should also mention that the new and majestic 32-storey building standing on a prime site close to the central banking and business district is the St John Tower, where the offices of the St John Council for Hong Kong, the District Headquarters of the St John Ambulance Brigade and the St John Ambulance Association are located.

Above the St John offices in the building is a luxurious hotel. It is the result of a joint venture in which St John Hong Kong will receive a percentage from the net profit of the hotel business annually with reversionary rights after about 20 years.
St John Fellowship in the Commandery of Ards

By John Hughes

There are eight branches of the Fellowship in the Commandery of Ards in Northern Ireland. They carry the unusual names of Bann, Braid, Inver, Lagan, North Down, Loughview, Moat and Londonderry Area; the first four are named after local rivers.

The President of the Fellowship Branches is Dr Betty Nicholl, a former District Commissioner. The representative on the UK Central Committee is Miss Kathleen Gill.

In recognition of the support which the Branches give to the St John Ambulance Brigade, the Commandery of Ards is to present the Fellowship with a gonfalon embroidered with the badge of the Fellowship.

The Commandery of Ards was formed in 1952. The 60 members on the Grand Priory Roll living in Northern Ireland were transferred to the new Commandery Roll.

Ards had been established as a Commandery of the Priory of Ireland in 1189. It owned vast tracts of lands in Counties Antrim and Down. It had its headquarters in Castlboy in the Ards Peninsula. The Commandery surrendered its property to the Crown in 1559.

Following the restructuring of the Order of St John in 1999, the Commandery of Ards became a dependent Commandery of the new Priory of England and the Islands.

The St John hub is in large premises in Knockbracken Healthcare Park in Belfast. The building was one of 15 villas built in the 1920s to cater for the needs of mentally ill patients. Although the inside of the building has been altered greatly during various refurbishments, there are still signs of its former use as a home for 50 female patients.

St John has been active in Northern Ireland since the Association started first aid classes in 1881. The first Division of the Brigade was formed in 1892.

Given its long history, it is not surprising that the Commandery holds an extensive archive. The collection includes a library, newspaper cuttings, silverware, medals, photographic

library, pictures, banners, armour, medical equipment and uniforms. The collection is on permanent display in the Museum, Commandery Room and Library.

Pride of place goes to the library, which contains several hundred books, pamphlets and monographs. Two private collections have been donated. The Perowne collection includes a valuable copy of the Histoire de Chevaliers de Malte by L’Abbe de Verdot.

The celebrations in 2002 to mark the 50th anniversary of the revival of the Commandery were marked by the presentation of gifts from the Grand Council, the Priories of England, Scotland and Wales, the Commandery of Western Australia, the St John Council of Cyprus and the Brigade in the Republic of Ireland.

The medal collection includes the WW2
wartime ‘skeleton’ badge issued between 1939 and 1947. There are 32 labels of Nursing Members efficiency medallions from 1906 to 1948. A silver cigarette box from 1897 contains the original cigarettes.

Two of the Commandery symbols are of special interest. The Cross is unique in its form, being an 8-pointed silver plated Order cross inside a 12-inch ring. The Sword was made in Jerusalem and is a replica of that carried by Godfrey de Bouillon at the capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099.

Unusual items in the collection include a model of the Santa Anna, a love spoon, the Perth Mint, a carved image of a fertility goddess, a wooden collection box with handle, and a round clerical hat with badge believed to have worn by an Order chaplain.

Personal memorabilia include the St John pennant flown by the Duke of Westminster, a former Knight Commander, when travelling in his Rolls Royce to meetings of the Commandery Chapter. Two small models of Knights of St John in armour were presented by Countess Mountbatten following her visit in 1951.

In 1925 it was decided to look into the possibility of establishing a First Aid Division in the Kenya Police Force. At the time, only three members of the Force possessed St John First Aid Certificates. The initial classes started in Nairobi, and by 1928, 16 members of the Police Force had qualified as first aiders.

Further permission was obtained to form the first Ambulance division and by 1930, there was a division in Mombassa and Kisumu, in addition to Nairobi. There were now 81 certified first aiders. The first Police Ambulance went into service with the Nairobi Division. The work of the St John Ambulance continued to grow and spread to the Railways and civilian population.

By 1939, there were sufficient members in the Brigade to form a separate District and Mr Cavendish, the Commissioner of Police, became the first St John Commissioner, ably assisted by the General Manager of KU Railways, Sir Godfrey Rhodes. Since then branches have developed in all the main towns in Kenya where first aid and nursing classes were held. Members of the Brigade give assistance at all major functions.

The Brigade in Kenya now has a membership of approximately 50,000.
St John Ambulance in Western Australia

By Terry Walton

The State of Western Australia covers almost one third of the area of Australia and is nearly 11 times the size of mainland Great Britain.

In 1883, the St John Ambulance Association was established in Australia. It was not until 1892, nine years later, that Mathieson Henry Jacoby, a commercial agent from South Australia, founded the Centre in Perth, Western Australia. At that time, living conditions in the 62-year-old colony were very poor. The discovery of gold in 1885 had brought an enormous increase in the population of a city ill prepared to expand. East Perth, for example, was nothing more than a tented city plagued by disease. There was little, if any, sanitation. Jacoby was supported in his endeavours by the medical profession, including Dr George McWilliams who taught the early first aid classes and who later founded the St John Ambulance Brigade in 1904.

The next major change in St John did not occur until 1947, when Australia became a Priory of the Order and Western Australia a Commandery. The State Council, formed by the Commandery, is the supreme governing body for all major policy decisions affecting St John activities in the State, including the Ambulance Service.

Following the establishment of the Commandery, it was decided to purchase a ceremonial sword and scabbard. However, the cost to produce the sword was too high so a Brigade member, George Truman, who was a welder by trade, obtained a cast blank of the blade from Sheffield, to which he added a crosspiece forged from the piston of a bulldozer. The blade was made from spring steel and was chromium plated. The hilt was made from buffalo horn with inlay of mother-of-pearl from Northern Australia. Two St John badges, donated by other St John members, were set in mother-of-pearl on either side of the hilt.

Don Fewster, an early member of one of the ambulance crews, used to tell the following story: “We often had a fire at our central depot at Wellington Street, because it used to get very cold there. Fuel was a problem as Hec Adams, the manager, was stingy and would not lay out enough money to keep the duty room in firewood. We devised an effective trick for obtaining fuel; we used to turn a hose on the engine drivers shunting trains along the track behind the depot and they would retaliate by throwing coal back at us. When the train had moved on, we’d go down the track to collect the coal.”

There is no documentary evidence that uniforms were worn between 1904 and 1920. Uniforms for members did not appear until the early 1920s, because divisions were very badly off for funds. Armbands were worn when performing duties. The Brigade during this time had often been described as “looking less like a well-marshalled cohort of Hospitaliers and more like Swagmen.”

At the first St John Ambulance Association Annual Conference, which was held in April 1920 in Melbourne, it was decided that the uniform should be standardised to brown, as this was a more practical colour for the Australian climate. As the Western Australian representatives had a two day train journey back to Perth, they left the conference early. In their absence, the remaining states changed the decision on the colour of the uniform from brown to black and white, as worn by most countries. But the Western Australia Brigade continued to wear brown until 1989, when all the States of Australia St John underwent a complete change to modernise and standardise their image. The Brigade then changed its name to ‘St John Ambulance Australia, Operations Branch’ and so Western Australia, which had been out of step with the rest of the Commonwealth of Australia until that time, adopted the new unisex black and white uniform with the characteristic bush hat. After two years it was decided, in Western Australia, to bring the Operations Branch into line with the W.A. Ambulance Service and change to wearing green.

The name ‘Operations Branch’ both in Western Australia and Northern Territory proved to be a problem, because St John runs the State Ambulance Service in both States. To avoid confusion, the title “Volunteer First Aid Service” was adopted in Western Australia, which is still the name used by the Brigade.

The first cadet division was formed in Fremantle, the port of Perth, in 1932.
and cover a larger area than the adults’ Operations Branch. One reason for this is that the State Government pays for regular advertisements, both in the press and on television, for all cadet organisations. The other is that the cadets are run in country sub-centres (ambulance stations).

Adult divisions within the Operations Branch of the Perth metropolitan area only perform first aid duties, which include the use of mobile first aid units. They do not have ambulances. Major duties are very varied. For example, on ANZAC day, when services of remembrance are held at sunrise around local or state war memorials, the pubs open for breakfast and remain open all day – so members of the Operations Branch can become very busy. Other major duties include The City to Surf Fun Run, the Perth Royal Agricultural Show and the Avon Descent, a boat race over a weekend, with the participants from all over the world taking part in competitions for speedboats and canoes. Excitement during the races is so intense that fatalities have occurred. On other duties, a flight with the Royal Flying Doctor Service may be needed to get to a location 200 miles from the divisional centre.

The remotest division and Ambulance Sub-centre in the Western Australia District is on Christmas Island, about 1,600 miles from the State headquarters in Perth. The division annual review, which is carried out by State staff volunteers, only occurs every three years.

St John took on the task of providing the State’s ambulance service in 1922: its operations were described as having “four motor ambulances operating in a five mile radius of the Murrey Street Depot.” In its first year, the ambulances attended 1,911 calls and travelled 9,180 miles and cost about £1,900 to run. Today Western Australia and Northern Territory are the only two regions in Australia where St John administers the national ambulance service. In all other states and territories, the ambulance service is government operated.

The large land mass and sparse population of Western Australia make it obvious that it would not be practical to have paid personnel to cover all the outlying areas, therefore, outside the metropolitan area of Perth, there are about 2,000 volunteers crewing 259 ambulances from 249 sub-centres in the country areas and the outback. These are augmented by paid career staff in locations that are in high-risk areas away from Perth, such as Kalgoorlie, a large gold mining town. All paid ambulance crews in country areas are paramedics who are able to perform minor surgical procedures and give limited medication. Even so the Ambulance Service cannot cover the most distant areas, which are mainly desert. People who live in remote places have to rely on the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Basic first aid courses given to Aboriginal communities do not cover either external air resuscitation or cardiopulmonary resuscitation, because we have to respect their customs and beliefs that, once the heart stops, the spirit has left the patient’s body and nothing can be done to revive him or her. However the spirit does not depart immediately but stays in the surroundings, whether that be a room, hut or ambulance, for six months, during which time members of that community will not enter the area. For this reason, nobody ever dies in an ambulance and special huts are provided outside hospitals.

The new St John Ambulance museum is located within a very accessible part of the Belmont HQ. It is open to St John members and the public every Wednesday. It is the largest St John museum in Australia. You will be made very welcome when you visit.
Treasures from the Gate

by Tom Perret

This portrait of Queen Victoria shows her at one of the most important moments in the history of St John.

Queen Victoria is shown seated, holding the Royal Charter she granted to the British Order of St John in 1888. This made the Order of St John a Royal Order of Chivalry, in recognition of the excellent work performed by members of the Order of St John during the past half century, especially the establishment of the St John Ambulance Association and the foundation of the St John Ophthalmic Hospital in Jerusalem. The Charter established the Queen as Patron and Sovereign Head of the Order, as her great great grand-daughter Queen Elizabeth is today.

Notice the painting of Queen Victoria’s husband in the left hand corner. He had died aged 42 in 1861 and she wore black, in mourning for him, for the rest of her life, as she does here.

The painting was commissioned from Earnest Dudley Heath in 1898. It is so large that Heath, who usually specialised in miniatures, had to move to a higher studio.

The painting hangs today above the fireplace in the Council Chamber, the room above the archway of St John’s Gate, and can be seen on our regular tours. Why not join one and come along and see it? Regular tours take place at 11.00 and 2.30 on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays. Give us a call (020 7324 4074) if you are bringing a large group, otherwise just come along on the day.