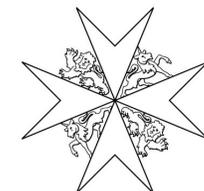
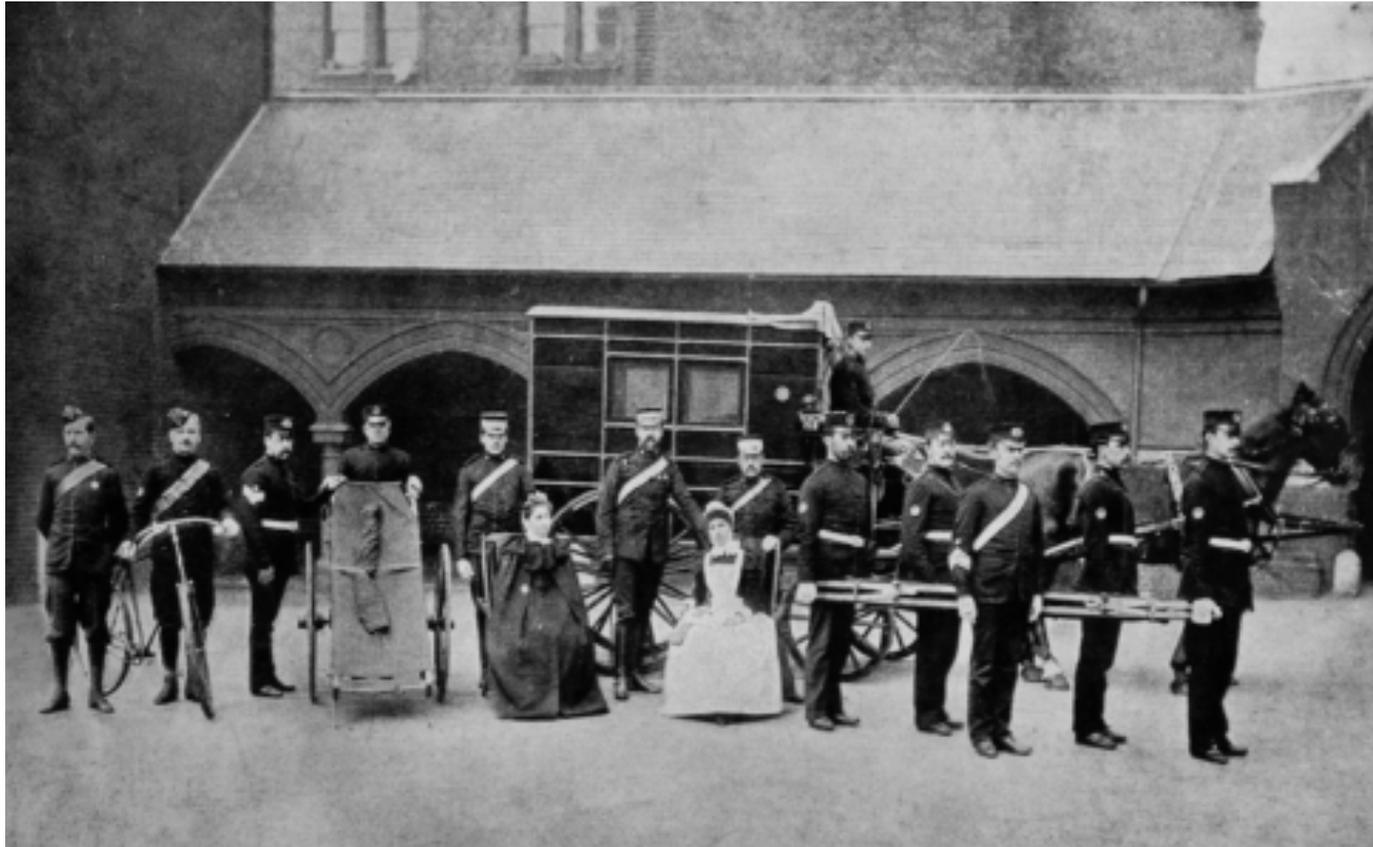


Accident and Emergency: St John Ambulance in Victorian Britain



Museum of
THE ORDER OF
ST JOHN

The buildings and collections of the Museum of the Order of St John tell many fascinating stories spanning a period of almost one thousand years.

Discover what life was like in Victorian Britain and how St John Ambulance came to play such an important role in the nation's health care.

Key Stage: 2

Duration: 1 hour

Objectives:

- Know what first aid is
- Understand why St John Ambulance was so important in Victorian Britain
- Be able to use museum collections to find out about the past
- Know about the role of St John Ambulance today

What is the Order of St John?

The Order of St John was founded by Christian monks. When joining the Order, members agreed to spend their lives caring for and protecting sick people.

The Order of St John built its first hospital in Jerusalem in 1080, to care for travellers who had become sick on their journey to this special city.

The Order is nearly 1000 years old, and today the Order of St John cares for the sick and injured through St John Ambulance.

The healthcare mission of St John Ambulance today is inspired by the caring role of those first monks in Jerusalem.



What is St John Ambulance?

St John Ambulance is a first aid charity which was established to provide first aid and healthcare to those in need.

Do you know what first aid is?

First aid means the first care and treatment given to someone who is injured or unwell.

Activity (2 mins)

Think of three examples when somebody might need first aid. The examples might include accidents at home, an injury from playing sport, or somebody becoming unwell at school.

You can discuss your examples or write them down.



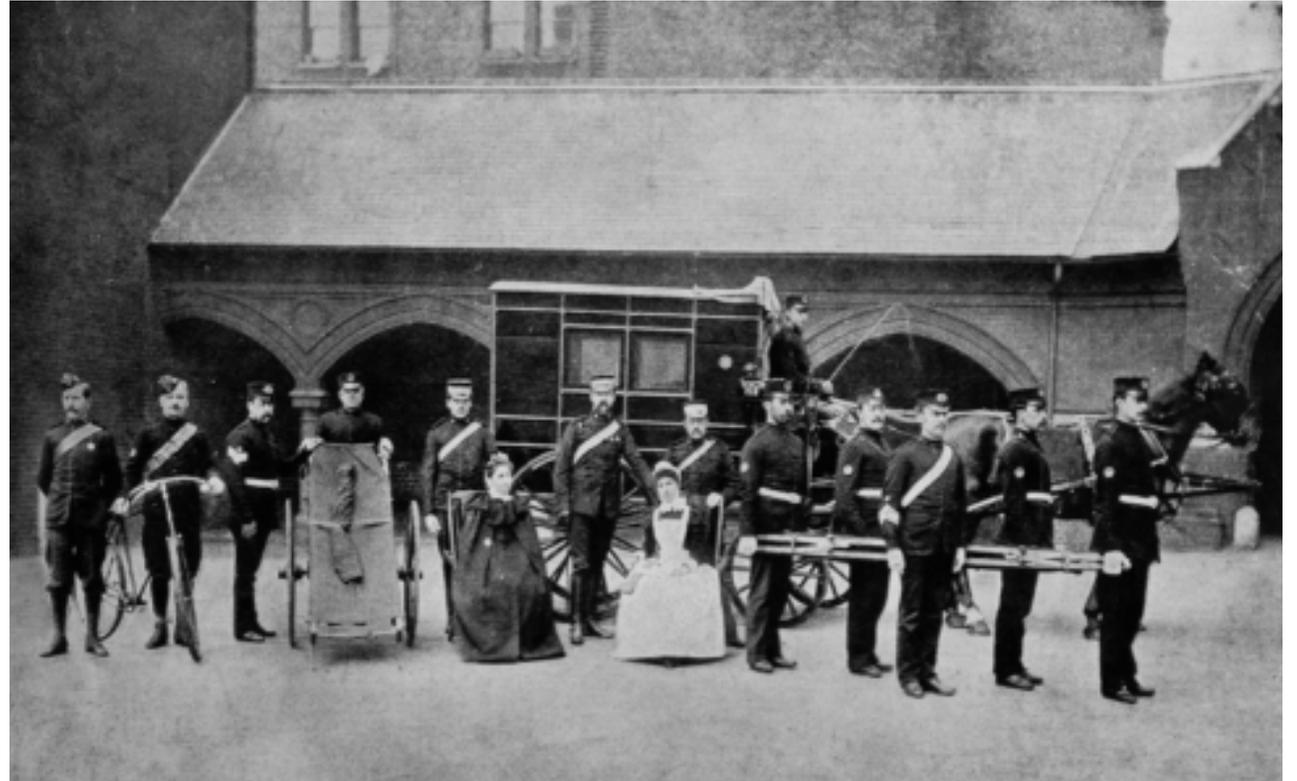
Centuries of providing care and first aid

From its beginnings nearly 1000 years ago...



The Blessed Gerard, the first master of the Order of St John who founded the first hospital in Jerusalem in 1080

...to providing vital first aid training in the 19th century...



The first St John Ambulance Brigade division formed in 1890

...to St John
Ambulance
today!



This is a picture of a modern-day St John Ambulance volunteer, but today we are going to be exploring the story of St John Ambulance during the reign of Queen Victoria.

Have you seen our first aid volunteers at events like concerts, football matches or fireworks displays?

Let's travel back to Victorian Britain...

Today we are travelling back in time to the reign of Queen Victoria, to discover why St John Ambulance was so important in the Victorian era.

St John Ambulance was created in 1877 when Queen Victoria was on the throne.

Activity (1 min)

Have you heard of Queen Victoria?

Share or write down one fact that you know about Queen Victoria.

Here is Queen Victoria. This portrait was painted in 1898 and it is displayed in St John's Gate, where you will find the Museum of the Order of St John. It is there to remind us of Queen Victoria's key role in recognising the work of St John Ambulance. She made St John a Royal Order in 1888.



Life in Victorian Britain

Queen Victoria reigned over the country from 1837 to 1901, that's 64 years!

But life was very different in the 1800s compared to life in 2020.

Healthcare as we know it today did not exist in Victorian Britain. The National Health Service (NHS) provides us with free medical care today, but it was not founded until 1948, after World War Two.

What would happen if you were unwell? Who would you go to see?

People in Victorian Britain had to pay for doctors if they were sick or injured, but not everybody could afford to pay and there were big differences in the quality of healthcare given to the rich and the poor.



A slum in the city of Glasgow, 1868 © The British Library

Children in Victorian Britain

When Queen Victoria came to the throne in 1837 many children did not go to school.

It was mostly children from wealthy families who went to school or who would have been educated by a tutor at home.

While wealthy children had access to a good education, poor children were forced to work from a young age to support their families.

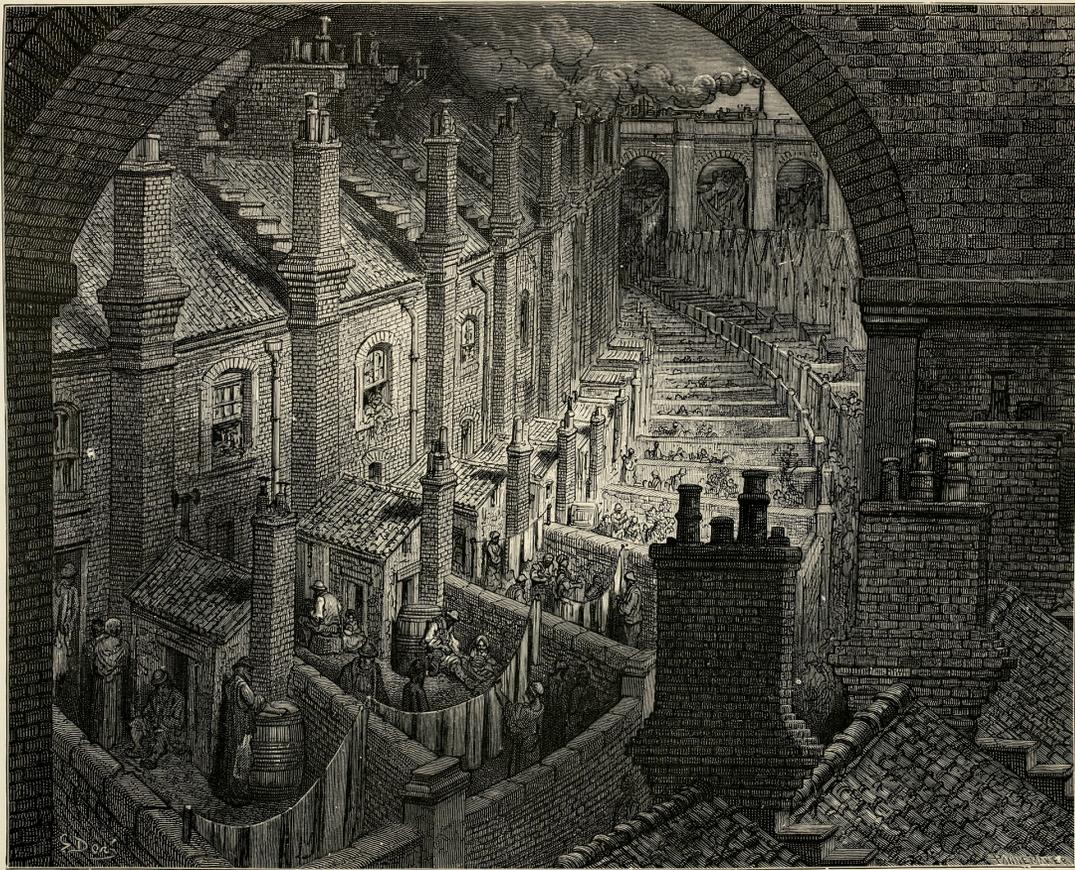
There were many different jobs that children might have done in Victorian times.

Turn to the next pages to find out more.



Industrialisation

During the reign of Queen Victoria, Britain was going through something called industrialisation.



Overcrowded housing in London, 1872. © The British Library



Factories of Messrs Fairbairn and Sons in Manchester, 1860. © The British Library

Industrialisation means that people stopped making goods by hand and started mass-producing them in factories using machines. The factories were built in cities and thousands of people moved from the countryside to live and work in the overcrowded, dirty cities.

Conditions in factories for children

Many children were employed in factories across the country. Factory owners liked employing children because they didn't have to pay them as much as adults. They also liked employing children because they had fewer rights than adults; children could be made to work for many hours without a break, and if a child got tired and fell asleep at their work the factory owner could tie them to their chair to prevent it from happening again.

If a child misbehaved or didn't work hard enough, the factory owner might even beat them.



A boy working the automatic boring machine at Stott Park in about 1906 © English Heritage

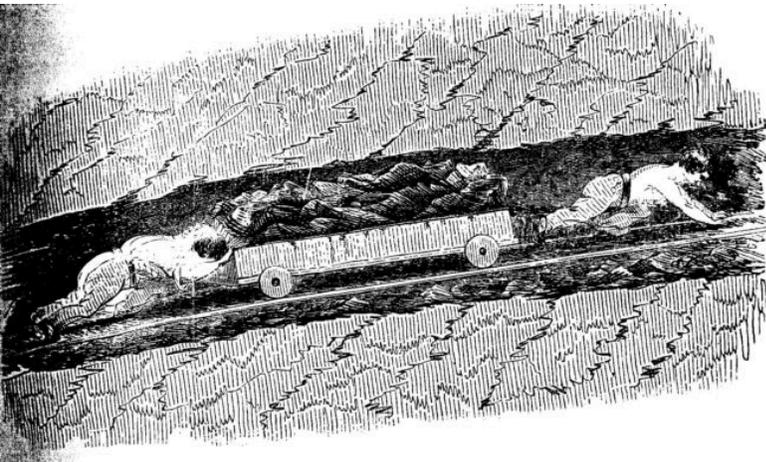
Another reason that factory owners favoured employing children was that children's hands were small enough to reach into moving machines if anything got stuck, so they didn't have to turn them off and stop the production line. If they happened to lose a finger (or their whole hand!) children were easy to replace.

Children in mines

The machines used in the factories were powered by coal.

Where do you think coal comes from?

Children were employed in mines to perform several different jobs depending on their age. In 1842 a law was passed to make it illegal for women and children under the age of ten to work in the mines, but before that it was common for whole families to work together underground to earn enough money for the family to live on. Most children started work underground at about eight years old, but some were as young as five.



The trapper

The trapper was often the youngest member of the family working underground. It was their job to sit in the pitch dark for over 12 hours a day opening and closing a trap door to allow the coal carts to pass through. This wasn't a difficult job, but it was boring and dangerous. If the trapper fell asleep and fell forward onto the tracks, he or she could easily be hurt by a passing cart.

The hurrier and the thruster

The hurrier and thruster were women and older children who were employed to transport the tubs of coal through the mine. The hurrier dragged the coal cart, while the thruster helped by pushing it from behind. The tubs of coal could weigh up to 600 kilos, the weight of about 17 children. The tunnels through which the hurrier and the thruster had to transport the coal were often only one to two metres high.

This photograph shows a trapper at work in a mine.

Photographs like this are very important because they help us to understand what life was like for everyday Victorian people.

Activity (3 mins)

1. List three things you notice about the conditions that these children were working in.
2. How do you think it would feel to work in a mine like this? Share or write down your thoughts.



Children at work on railways

Once the coal was dug up out of the ground it would be transported across the country by trains that were powered by the steam made from boiling water over a coal fire.

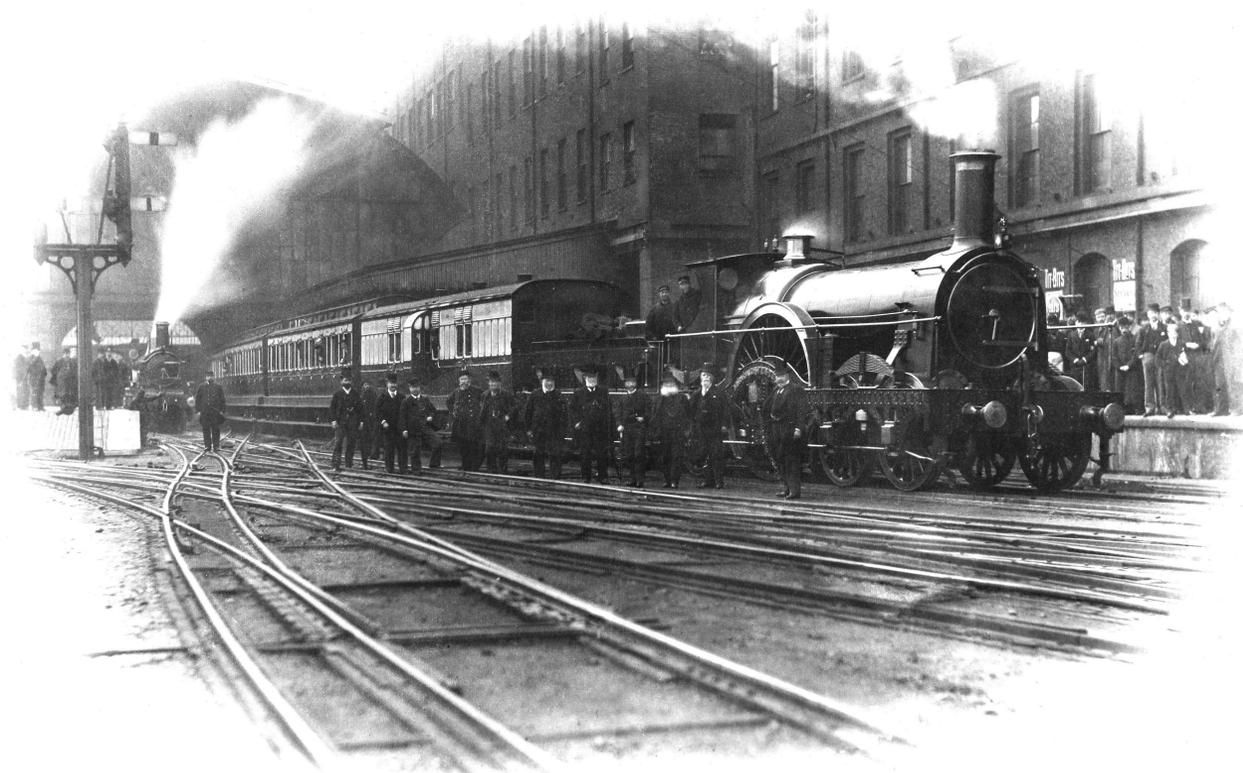
During Queen Victoria's reign, railways spread across the country. The trains helped people and goods move around the country much faster.

How do you think people travelled before the railways?

Working on the railways was also a very dangerous job.

Young boys were often given the job of cleaning all the soot and dirt off the engine while the train was stopped for the night. This could take hours and once they'd finished, they would have to walk across the town in the early hours of the morning to wake the driver up for his shift so that he could inspect their work.

Older boys would be employed in the railway stations as porters, working long hours, carrying heavy bags for passengers, loading trains, and running errands for the Station Master.



Why was St John Ambulance so important?

Factories, mines and railways were very risky places to work. Working conditions were dangerous, and accidents were common.

Seeing a doctor in Victorian times was very expensive and workers often couldn't afford to pay.

Accidents at work could result in disability or death.

Someone or something was needed to help those people who had been injured at work, so St John Ambulance was set up in 1877 to provide free first aid training to people working in these dangerous places.

Within the first year St John Ambulance trained over one thousand volunteers.



Some of the first officers of St John Ambulance Brigade

First aid training

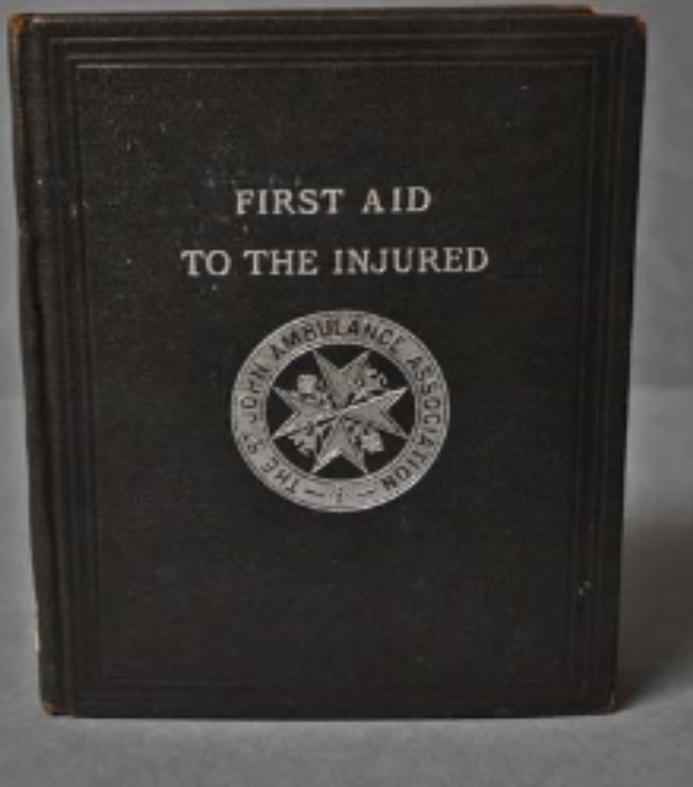
This is a photograph of the Tibshelf Colliery St John Ambulance Association.

The volunteers were workers at Tibshelf Colliery, a mine located in Derbyshire in England. The volunteers were trained in first aid to help fellow workers who had been injured in the mine.

Do you see the man lying on a stretcher in this photograph?

How do you think this miner became injured?



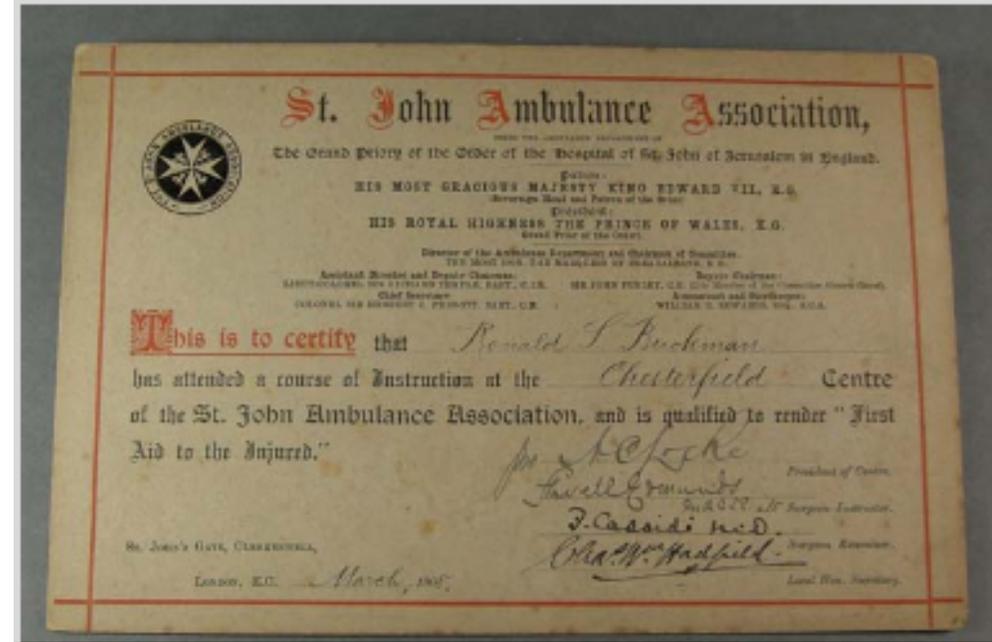


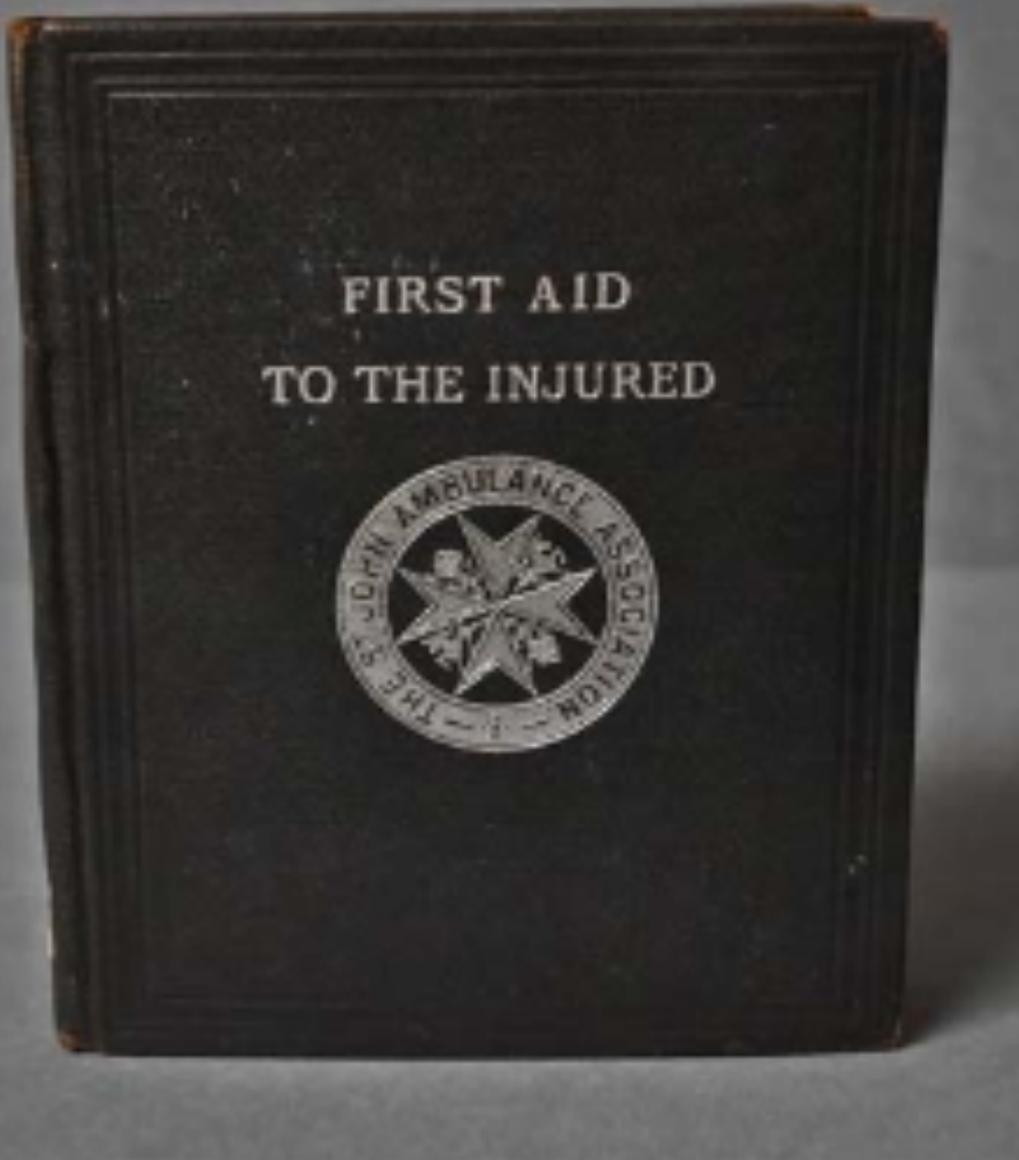
Activity (8 mins)

Look at these four objects. These objects would have been provided to the Tibshelf Colliery volunteers to help them give first aid.

How do you think each object would be useful in treating the man on the stretcher?

Decide what you think each object is and write down how it would be used or why it is important.





This is a first aid handbook, called *First Aid to the Injured*.

The St John Ambulance Association taught the public first aid using handbooks like this one. The 'Syllabus of Instruction' at the beginning of the handbook shows the range of topics that were covered. Volunteers studied the human body, first aid techniques, how to transport casualties, and how to use a triangular bandage.

This piece of equipment is called a bandage winder.

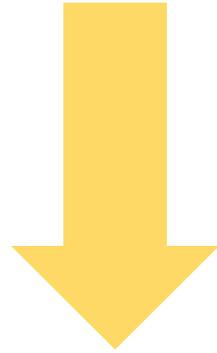
Though they may seem simple, bandage winders were considered an extremely important invention by first aiders and medical professionals. First created in the late 1800s, these tools made it easier to keep bandages and dressings organised, making quick work of tidying and restocking first aid supplies.

Bandage winders were also helpful when rolling up bandages which had been washed ready to be re-used. Descriptions of bandage winders and illustrations showing how to use them, were included in many First Aid to the Injured handbooks.



This is an illustrated triangular bandage.

Triangular bandages are an important part of any first aid kit. Instructions on how to use them can be found in St John Ambulance Association first aid manuals dating as far back as 1882. This is an illustrated triangular bandage. The pictures on it are there to show people how to use it. The numbers next to each of the pictures would have matched those on the instruction leaflet that originally came with it.





This is a first aid certificate.

People attending St John Ambulance Association first aid courses were expected to learn about all topics listed at the front of their first aid handbooks. Once all topics had been completed, participants were given certificates like this one.

These certificates were important because they indicated that the individual was qualified to give first aid to injured people and showed they had the knowledge to carry out first aid safely.



St John Ambulance Brigade

In 1887, as well as teaching people first aid, St John Ambulance volunteers started providing first aid at public events like football matches and parades.

One of the people who was responsible for this development was William Church Brasier.

William Church Brasier received several medals in recognition of his outstanding service and dedication to the development and success of the St John Ambulance Brigade.

William Church Brasier was very proud of his medals and of his work.



Yours very faithfully W. Church Brasier
The Mansion House
Photographic Co. reg.  *16 & 17 POULTRY*
CHEAPSIDE
14 July 1891

Volunteers on duty

One of St John Ambulance's first public duties occurred in 1887 when fifty St John Ambulance volunteers attended the celebrations for Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee.

With thousands of people lining the streets ready to cheer as the Queen passed by, the St John volunteers were ready to offer first aid to anyone who became injured or unwell while waiting in the crowds.

Can you see the St John Ambulance volunteers in this photograph?



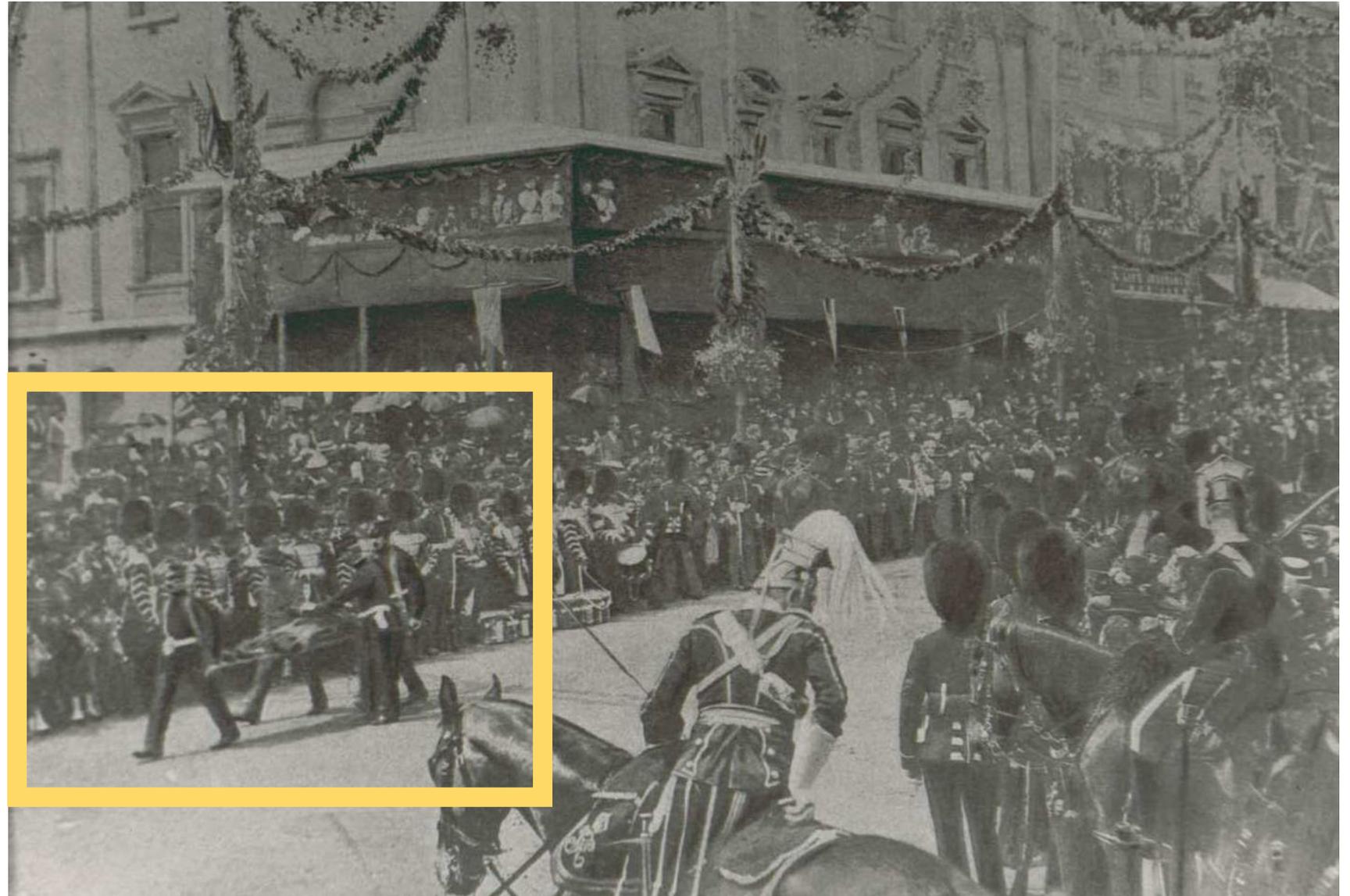
The St John Ambulance volunteers can be seen here carrying a person on a stretcher.

Activity (5 mins)

Use this photograph to consider what might have caused the person on the stretcher to need help from St John Ambulance volunteers.

- Was the person in the crowd? What are the conditions like for people watching in the crowd?
- Was the person in the military? Look at their uniform, does it look comfortable to you?

Write down two examples explaining what might have happened.



Queen Victoria and St John Ambulance

Prince Albert Edward, the eldest son

The eldest of Queen Victoria's children was Prince Albert Edward who would eventually be crowned King Edward VII. He was known as His Royal Highness Edward Prince of Wales, but his mother used to call him Bertie.

Prince Albert Edward was a keen supporter of the Order of St John and St John Ambulance and he and his family petitioned the Queen to grant the Order a Charter of Incorporation which would make it a Royal Order of Chivalry.



Queen Victoria

Queen Victoria and St John Ambulance

On the 14th of May 1888 Queen Victoria granted the Order of St John the first Charter of Incorporation.

This meant that the Order of St John became a Royal Order of Chivalry, and the Queen appointed herself the Sovereign Head and Patron of The Order, meaning that she was in charge. His Royal Highness Edward Prince of Wales became its Grand Prior.



Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II is the Sovereign Head and Patron of the Order today.



This is the badge of the Order of St. John. It is the Maltese Cross with a lion or a unicorn between each of the arms of the cross.

Conclusion

We have explored the history of the Order of St John and St John Ambulance during the reign of Queen Victoria.

We've discovered how dangerous Victorian working conditions could be, and why these dangerous working conditions meant there was a need for an organisation like St John Ambulance which could provide first-aid.

Finally, we've met some of the key characters that helped to create St John Ambulance and we've discovered how The Order of St John became a Royal Order of Chivalry.

Well done everyone!

Take a look at the next page to get hands on and create your own medal!



Activity: Medal making



You'll need:

1. Some card
2. Scissors
3. A piece of ribbon or string
4. Colouring pencils or pens
5. Foil, glitter or gems to decorate

Method:

1. Place a mug or cup over the card and trace around it to draw a circle.
2. Carefully cut the circle out.
3. Use a pencil to push a small hole through the top of the circle.
4. Decorate your medal. Use the medals in our collection for inspiration or get creative with your own design!
5. Cut your ribbon/string to a length that will allow your medal to fit over your head.
6. Thread the ribbon/string through the hole in your medal and tie a knot in it.
7. Wear for everyone to see!

Find out more...

Read more about St John Ambulance in the Victorian era

['The Chief' W.J. Church Brasier](#)

[A Family Affair: Queen Victoria's family and the Order of St John](#)

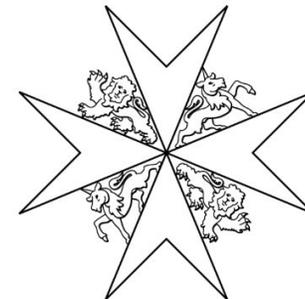
[Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee](#)

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