

Family History Information Sheet

The Archive at the Museum of the Order of St John holds records which relate to the modern Order of St John and also St John Ambulance, and it is useful to know which is which:

The Order of St John is a Chivalric Order, of which people can become members on recommendation for their humanitarian work, and often for their work with St John Ambulance. Membership has various grades: starting with Member (formerly Serving Sister or Serving Brother), Officer, Commander, Knights and Dames, and finishing with the highest grades of Bailiff and Dame Grand Cross. The Order has roots in the medieval period, but the current Order of St John, with its headquarters in England, was established in the Victorian period.

St John Ambulance is one of the Order's charitable outputs. It began in 1877 with the establishment of the St John Ambulance Association (SJAA) to train people in first aid. In 1887, the St John Ambulance Brigade (SJAB) was established to provide practical first aiders to serve at public events. The Association and Brigade merged in 1968 and exist today simply as St John Ambulance (SJA).

What do we hold in our Archive?

We hold records that confirm membership of the St John Ambulance Association and Brigade. These records are not complete and are primarily for members serving in London and Kent, so not every member of St John will be represented within these records. These records are stored in alphabetical order according to individuals' surnames, so in order for us to undertake research of these records, we will need to know the full name for the individual.

If you are researching an individual who held a senior position within SJAA/SJAB/SJA, it is possible that we might find a record of them in the Annual Reports or *First Aid* (the independent journal for the ambulance and nursing services). You are welcome to view and word-search digitized copies of the Annual Reports from 1868-1970 online [here](#), and digitized copies of our entire collection of *First Aid* (1894-1953) online [here](#).

We hold records of Service Medal recipients - members of St John Ambulance who were awarded for long service - mostly from the 1920s onwards. These records are stored in alphabetical order according to individuals' surnames, so in order for us to undertake research of these records, we will need to know the full name for the individual. You can find out about Service Medals through a blog post [here](#).

We hold records of Life Saving Medal recipients - awarded to individuals across the world who saved or attempted to save the life of another, and placed themselves at risk while doing so. These records are stored in alphabetical order according to individuals' surnames, so in order for us to undertake research of these records, we will need to know the full name for the individual. You can find out about Life Saving Medals through a blog post [here](#).

Please refer to our [Medals Information Sheet](#) and [Collection Highlights](#) for overviews and examples of the most common medals which will help you to identify your medal and answer queries.

If you believe the individual you are researching may have been a Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse during the First World War you can search for their record card online via the [British Red Cross archive](#) online. We hold some records of VAD/Auxiliary Hospitals during the First World War, and you can check which ones on our First World War collection finding aid [here](#).

We hold records of Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) personnel during the Second World War. These records are stored in alphabetical order according to individuals' surnames, so in order for us to undertake research of these records, we will need to know the full name for the individual.

We have a comprehensive record of Order membership and will therefore be able to tell you whether the person you are enquiring about became a member of the Order and the dates for admissions and promotions (where applicable). We also hold many citations (nomination forms) for Order membership and so we may be able to tell you the reasons why someone was nominated or promoted. These are confidential records, so we will not be able to tell you who made the nomination. If you are researching an individual who held a senior position within the modern Order, it is possible that we might find a record of them in the Annual Reports which, and you are welcome to view and word-search digitized copies of the Annual Reports from 1868-1970 online [here](#).

If you are looking to donation objects, artefacts, documents, or photographs to the Museum, please send clear photographs of the item(s) and any information you have about the item to museum@sja.org.uk so that the curatorial team can assess whether we are able to accept the donation. Please note that we have a strict acquisitions policy and may not be able to accept all offers, but we appreciate the kind offers we receive and would always like to see more St John history.

Access restrictions and data protection

Please note that Order citations remain confidential documents and we are therefore unable to provide direct transcripts or photocopies.

The Archive is bound by the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which prevent us from searching for and sharing information held on an individual if they are still living, unless we receive their direct express permission to do so in writing in advance.

Research fees and how to support the Museum

The Museum of the Order of St John is one of the great hidden treasures of London, tracing the continuous history of a charity that dates back over 900 years. The Order of St John, an international charity, has a remit to provide humanitarian aid and medical support worldwide, and the Museum cannot draw upon its funds. The Museum receives no government funding, and we need continued financial help to maintain the historically important buildings and collections.

The Museum charges a research fee of £10 for each research enquiry. This fee covers the cost of staff time in undertaking the research, although please note that payment is not a guarantee that relevant information will be found. The research fee is payable in advance by cheque (made out to St John Ambulance), or in person at the Museum.

If you would like to support the Museum by making a financial donation, you can do so in person by cash, card, cheque during Museum opening hours (Wednesday-Saturday, 10:00-17:00), or by texting **'PSOS17 £5'** to **70070** to donate £5.