

# Historical Happenings

## HON. ALFRED MULLER SIMPSON MLC

One of the smallest and yet one of the most charming exhibits in the St John Ambulance Museum is a leather folder measuring less than 8 cm. tall and only 5.5 cm. wide. It is in perfect condition and bears on its front cover a 2 cm. wide circular emblem with the words "ST JOHN AMBULANCE ASSOCIATION" at its circumference. In the centre of the emblem is an eight-pointed cross. At the base of the circular emblem is what may well be a representation of St John's Wort, but a magnifying glass is needed to see it.

The inside of this little folder reveals that this is a Life Membership Certificate issued by the St John Ambulance Association Adelaide Centre. In beautiful Gothic calligraphy the name of the recipient is "Hon. A M Simpson, MLC". The certificate is signed by James P Roberts, the Adelaide Centre's Honorary Secretary and it is dated, this time in beautiful copper-plate writing, 10th October 1887.

### Who was Alfred Muller Simpson?

He was born in London on 4 April 1843, son of Alfred and Sarah Simpson. The family moved to South Australia, arriving in early 1849. The elder Alfred Simpson established a tinsmith business making jam tins for Glen Ewin Jams. He, with the help of his son who joined the firm on his 21st birthday, broadened the range of products to include, during wartime, ammunition boxes and helmets, and at other times safes, stoves, dryers, washing machines, petrol drums and a range of enamelled ware including water bottles and various receptacles used in hospitals.

Alfred Muller Simpson continued to enlarge the business until it was the largest metal manufacturing plant in Australia and quite possibly in the Southern Hemisphere. Alfred Muller Simpson was also involved in a wide range of community activities. He promoted the 1887 Jubilee Exhibition, was a Freemason, a director of the Adelaide and Suburban Tramway Company, a Trustee of the State Bank, Chairman of the Port Adelaide Dock Company, President of the Royal Agricultural and Horticultural Society and a Member of the Legislative Council. Set in the pavement on North Terrace, Adelaide, in what is known as the Jubilee 150 Walk, is a plaque in memory of Alfred Muller Simpson.

The little leather folder attests that he was also involved in the early years of the St John Ambulance Association Centre Committee in Adelaide. He joined the committee in 1885 and remained a member until his death some 31 years later. He also held the positions of deputy chairman and vice president of the committee. He was one of the very first South Australians to be admitted to the Order of St John. This admission was in 1909 as an "Honorary Associate", a term no longer used in the Order.

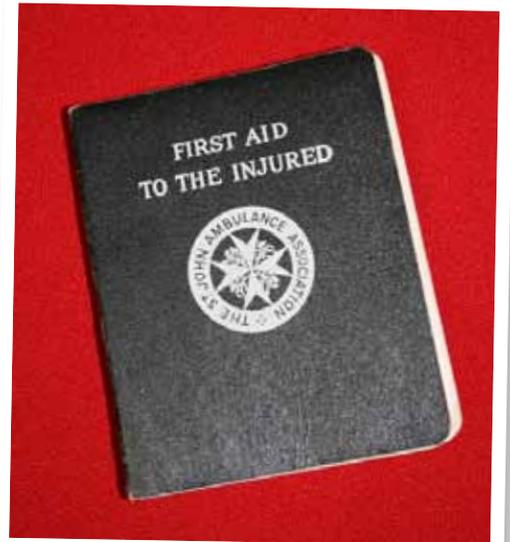
Alfred Muller Simpson died on 28 September 1917. His grave is in the West Terrace Cemetery.

**Question: Simpson Appliances operate today as part of what manufacturing group?**

**Brian Fotheringham**  
Chairman



historical  
society



**Answer to the last question: There are 140 biographies in "Celebrating Women in St John Ambulance Australia".**



The St John Ambulance  
**Historical Society**  
of South Australia