



## Historical Happenings FRANCES WRIGHT

Frances was a graduate of the very first St John Ambulance Association First Aid Course for women conducted in Adelaide. It was held in the Outpatients' Room at the Children's Hospital, North Adelaide, in July 1885. There had been one earlier course but this was for men only. Interestingly men were charged five shillings (\$0.50) while women were charged 10 shillings and sixpence (\$1.05).

One of Frances' daughters was in that first First Aid course for women and also Frances' sister-in-law Ethel. Another pupil who was later to contribute significantly to St John was Annie Duncan. An extraordinary sixty-seven women enrolled for the class, fifty-one of them sat the examination and forty-five passed.

Frances, the youngest daughter of the first Police Commissioner in South Australia, Commissioner Thomas O'Halloran and his wife Jane, was born in 1839 and twenty one years later married Frederick Wright, the Manager of the National Bank of Australasia, Adelaide Branch. They had ten children. Perhaps it was this that induced Frances into being one of the founders of the Children's Hospital.

Frederick Wright joined the St John Ambulance Association's Centre Committee and for a few years he was both Chairman and Treasurer simultaneously.

After gaining her First Aid Certificate, Frances lobbied for a women's branch of the Association. This group became known as "The Ladies' St John Ambulance Mission NA", the "NA" standing for "North Adelaide". The Mission held its meetings at the Children's Hospital. The group provided practical First Aid classes for women, and raised money for charities, notably the Children's Hospital. The money they raised was sufficient to endow an "Ambulance Cot" at the Hospital from 1895 to 1934. Frances' work at the Hospital was recognised in that a ward was named after her. Sadly, the Frances Wright Ward no longer exists.

The Order of St John also gave recognition to Frances Wright. In 1892 she was the first woman in South Australia to be admitted to the Order as an "Honorary Associate".

Frances died in Surrey, England on 27 December 1901.

**References:**  
*Celebrating Women in St John Ambulance Australia.*  
*Edited by Sally Hasler and Ian Howie-Willis.*  
*South Australians and St John Ambulance, Ian Howie-Willis, 1985.*

**Brian Fotheringham**

*Next question:*

In what way did Annie Duncan contribute to St John?

# historical society



*Photograph of Frances Wright.*

**Answer to the previous question:**

Sir Edmund Lechmere was influential in establishing the St John Ophthalmic (Eye) Hospital in Jerusalem.



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