

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Wowan

In January 1917, in response to a request from the residents of Wowan and district H. Wanchap (Chairperson), G.F. Smith (Hon Treasurer) and Superintendent T.W. Duffill of the Mount Morgan Centre attended a public meeting in Wowan, and it was unanimously decided to open an Honorary Centre in the town. Honorary Bearer James Arneil was placed in charge and the Mount Morgan Committee decided to place a horse and wagon there for service.

The residents soon felt the usefulness of the Brigade in their midst, and it was decided in October 1917 to create a Sub-Centre at Wowan with a permanent Officer. Bearer W.G. Nash of Mount Morgan was appointed Officer-in-Charge with the rank of Senior Bearer.



Senior Officer W.C. Nash and Sub-Centre building 1917

With his wife and two children Bill Nash took up residence in Wowan under very crude and humble conditions. Their residence consisted of a 12 foot by 14-foot tent, with a bark galley to cook their food. The ambulance wagon and horse were housed in a shed at the back of the tent.

These ambulance quarters were on a parcel of land which had been purchased from Mr W.G. Henderson for the sum of £55.

In the 1918 floods, water was a foot deep in the tent. In the same year, the pneumonic influenza epidemic swept through the district. Mrs Nash was a fully qualified Nursing Sister and was placed in charge of the emergency hospital which was established in the public hall. Patients were cared for there until they could be moved the 32 miles to the Mount Morgan Hospital.

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The humpy-like structure that served the ambulance for 12 months was replaced by a two-storey wooden building which provided accommodation upstairs with the ground section being devoted entirely to Ambulance Services.

The following is an excerpt from the 1917 Annual Report of the Mount Morgan Committee regarding the Wowan Sub-Centre:

‘The financial assistance accorded during the year has been very gratifying, and we look forward with every confidence that the residents of the surrounding districts will respond in such a liberal manner, that will ensure a Brigade Building being erected in the near future free of debt; and further, we are pleased to say that practical assistance from our friends and supporters has been offered to erect the building on the ‘busy bee’ system, and we hope that when the time arrives to erect the building we will have a goodly muster of the “claw hammers and saws”.’



Opening Centre building 1919

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By 1919, the Sub-Centre was named Dawson Valley Sub-Centre and in that year the Mount Morgan Committee decided to open another Sub-Centre at Banana with Senior Bearer Alfred Mearing in charge. Banana Centre gained self-government on 1 April 1921.

At the close of 1919, the high price of horse feed, and the need to purchase another horse, convinced the Mount Morgan Committee to install a motor car, thus bringing the plant up-to-date and enabling it to dispense with the horse and wagon.

In March 1921, Senior Bearer Nash was appointed to the position of Superintendent of the Pomona Centre and was succeeded by Senior Bearer C.H. Hansen. Bill Nash stayed at the Pomona Centre for 19 years, and from there he transferred to Murgon where he served as Superintendent for 22 years. He retired at the age of 70 after 46 years in the QATB Service.

Towards the end of 1921, the subscribers thought that they would be better served if the Sub-Centre was converted to an independent Centre. Following representations to the Mount Morgan Committee and the QATB State Executive, Wowan was gazetted as a self-governing Centre on 22 November 1921. It commenced operations on 1 February 1922. The first Superintendent was Mr M.C. Achilles (formerly of the Brisbane staff). The first Committee consisted of J. McSweeney (Chairperson), D. Hillery (Hon Treasurer), J. Lindley, P. Lanigan, T. Gillson, E. Dunn and A.E.G. Barnard.

By June 1923, Superintendent Achilles had obtained the services of two Honorary Bearers - G. Wieland and T. Sprake.

The trial amalgamation of the Banana and Wowan Centres became effective on 14 July 1941. At that time the Honorary Staff consisted of J. Wilson (Thangool), F.M. Bendall (Goovigen), A.J. McPherson (Buneru), H.T. French (Pheasant Creek), W.J. Hill (Don River) and K.M. Carter (Wowan). The permanent officer at Banana prior to the amalgamation of the two areas was E. Edwards.

On August 1942, at the first Annual Meeting of the Committee which was formed of representatives of the two Centres, a motion was passed that as the trial of the Amalgamated Banana-Wowan Centre had proved a success, the agreement should be confirmed and the Centre be known as the Banana-Wowan Centre.

Early in 1944, the Banana-Wowan Centre opened a Sub-Centre at Biloela. This Sub-Centre became a self-governing Centre on 24 April 1945.

In December 1944, a further Sub-Centre was opened at Monto. One year and three months later it also became self-governing.

A Sub-Centre was opened at Goovigen in 1946 with Senior Bearer R. McCubben as Officer-in-Charge, and control was transferred to Biloela in 1957 when expansion in that part of the Callide Valley made the move practicable.

Plans to build a new centre at Wowan were launched in the early 1940s. Bearer Leader and a local Committee raised the finance necessary, the work commenced and when Fred Leader was appointed Superintendent of the Theodore Centre, the work stopped. When Mr Leader returned to the Wowan Centre as the Superintendent in 1950, he immediately started working on the structure and in ten

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months completed the building which reflected great credit on him as he personally performed most of the work.

In subsequent years, extensive alternations were made to the building and in 1988 a new brick residence for the Superintendent was erected.

Since the establishment of the self-governing Centre at Wowan the following Officers have filled the position of Superintendent:

1922 – 1925	M.C. Achilles
1925 – 1931	M.T. Chambers
1931 – 1939	E. Jeffries
1939 – 1940	F.J. O'Farrell
1940 – 1943	L.R. Mills
1943 – 1945	C.G.S. Stuart
1945 – 1950	F.J. O'Farrell
1950 – 1955	F.J. Leader
1955 – 1961	J.M. Stevens
1961 – 1969	R.J. Brennan
1969 – 1972	M.C. McDonald
1972 – 1977	D.F. Fay
1977 – 1981	K. Phipps
1981 – 1983	W.J. Morgan
1983 – 1987	R. Sheather
1987 – 1989	S. Burns
Present occupant Chairperson	D. Lang