

HISTORY OF THE *Queensland Ambulance*

Baralaba

On 5 December 1921, a meeting was held in the waiting room of the Baralaba Railway Station for the purpose of discussing the establishment of an ambulance service for the town and district. Those present at the meeting were F.G. Cordingly, W. Fos, G.H. Martins, F. Haas, E. Shepherd, J.H. Woolgar, A. Noble, G. Chapple, F. Stubbs, and W.H. Berry. It was decided that a Committee would be formed with J.H. Woolgar as Chairperson, W.H. Berry as Secretary and J. Haas as Treasurer.

The Committee was eager and active and set about raising funds to meet the cost of acquiring a vehicle, land and buildings.

A dance was held on 11 March 1922 and yielded a profit of £4,15s,0d (\$9.50). Also during the month land had been acquired and plans were in hand for erecting buildings and fences. In July 1922 first aid classes were being conducted and ten students were enrolled in the first class.

By a proclamation in the Government Gazette, the Governor of Queensland Sir Matthew Nathan declared that as from 24 June 1922 the QATB Baralaba Centre would be a self-governing Centre within the meaning of the Hospital Act.

Early in 1923 a building was erected and the Committee's sights were on that vehicle needed for the transportation of the sick and injured.



Central Building

Arrangements were made for the manufacture of a rail ambulance car. The design was produced by Mr A.C.H. Palmer in conjunction with Captain E.R.B. Pike, General Secretary of the State Executive. The

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Ruddle Engineering Company was responsible for the construction. The rail car had a Ford engine that was chain-driven. Unlike other vehicles in service at the time, it was reversible. The driver and attendant sat at right angles to the brake facing the patient. The fact that the designers departed from the orthodox designs by placing the radiator at the side was probably responsible for doubt being expressed about the efficiency of the vehicle. The cost was £436 complete. The arrival of the long-looked-for rail ambulance was a red-letter day for the town. There were a lot of very favourable comments and much speculation about what its first trip might be. However, a few days after its arrival, its maiden trip was made into Mount Morgan with two sick children and the ease and comfort with which they were transported gained unstinted praise from the parents of the children.

In March 1949, the rail ambulance car that had given such valuable service was sold to the Blackall QATB Committee for the sum of £100.

At this time, it was noted that the future of the township was very promising; the streets were well laid out, and some fine buildings graced the main street. A project was afoot to supply electric light to the shops and private houses. A permanent water supply was also to be laid to the houses. The Centre's first road vehicle, a Dodge Bros. Ambulance Car, was placed in service in May 1926.



Rail Ambulance 1923

Financial support fell away after the collapse of the local State-owned coal mine in the floods of 1928. Followed by the Depression, this almost put an end to the service. On 15 March 1933, a public meeting was convened and was attended by Captain Pike, General Secretary and the QATB Executive Committee. Captain Pike had arrived with the definite intention of closing down the service and taking the motor vehicle to Cracow. The townspeople rallied in support of the Committee and, following further talks with Captain Pike, it was decided that the car would remain in Baralaba and that the Centre would function as an Honorary Centre.

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The Honorary Centre was raised in status to that of a Centre in 1948 when Mr J.N. Blake was appointed as the first Superintendent. The following officers have been in charge of the Baralaba QATB Service:

1923 – 1928	Honorary Officer F. Haas
1928 – 1933	Officer-In-Charge & Secretary F. Haas
1933 – 1948	Honorary Centre
1948	Ambulance Officer C.G. Henderson
1948 – 1950	J.N. Blake
1950 – 1953	A. Lamberton
1953 – 1957	J.H. Flavelle
1957 – 1968	E.G. Nix
1968 – 1972	K.J. Tootell
1972 – 1975	H.R. Weeks
1975 – 1976	K. Leask
1976 – 1979	R.S. Forbes
1979 – 1990	W.H.B. Buckley
1990	J. Rimmer

The service has progressed through the years and the plant now consists of well-equipped vehicles. The present Committee is constantly looking at and evaluating new equipment that comes to its notice. Its aim is, within the scope of its finances, to purchase equipment that will add to the care and comfort of patients.

Chairpersons

Since the establishment of the Baralaba Centre, the following people have filled the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

July 1927 – June 1929	W. Hyde
June 1929 – March 1930	H. Mills
September 1930 – March 1933	S. Walker
March 1933 – May 1952	J.P. Bryson
June 1952 – November 1953	C.G. Henderson
June 1955 – March 1955	C.D. Cornford
April 1955 – April 1958	C.G. Henderson
April 1958 – May 1961	R.T. Lawson
April 1961 – June 1969	L.H. Drake
July 1969 – February 1970	E.R. Bienek
March 1970 – February 1972	A.F. Emslie
March 1972 – January 1974	J.L. Major
March 1974 – June 1975	L. Hansen
January 1975 – March 1982	J. Jarvis
April 1982 – March 1985	B.R. Gill
March 1985 – April 1988	Mrs. J. Tunsted
Present occupant	Chairperson J.W. Bidgood