

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance Blackall

At the quarterly meeting of the QATB State Executive Committee held on 3 May 1923 the General Secretary reported that the residents of Blackall proposed holding a public meeting to discuss the formation of a QATB service.

In presenting the first annual report of the QATB Blackall Centre for the year ending 30 June 1924 the Committee Chairperson (Rev G.E. Wheeler) stated:

'It seemed practically impossible (at the time we started) to anticipate that within a year we should have a very effective organisation in full swing, but from the night of the meeting called by myself at the Rectory, there was no doubt the Centre ought to be a success. This has been proved by the experience of the past twelve months.'

The service commenced operations in November 1923 in rented premises with Superintendent W.J. King (formerly of the Rockhampton staff) in charge. The first vehicle was a Nash Six.

The Provisional Committee comprised Rev G.E. Wheeler (Chairperson), E.J. Barnett (Hon Treasurer), D.W. Gaukrodger, D.S. Paterson, Sid Orchard, J.F. Banks, T. Richardson, W.E. Martin, C.W. Kingston, A.E. Greene, J. Ward, M. Flynn and S.E. Holmes. Mr Martin Flynn was appointed the Committee's representative on the State Executive Committee.



Building erected 1927

The work of the Brigade in Blackall had an inspiring effect on the community of Jericho, who requested that an Honorary Centre be established in the town. An Honorary Centre was opened there in March 1924 with Honorary Bearer H.G. Templeton in charge. Mr H. G. Behan was appointed Honorary Secretary of the Honorary Centre.

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Superintendent King was assisted by honorary member H. Trickey of Blackall.

In 1925 need was expressed for an extension of the ambulance work at Jericho, and the Committee, with the approval of the Jericho Committee and the State Executive, decided to raise the status of Jericho from an Honorary Centre (with honorary bearers) to a Sub-Centre with a fully qualified and full-time bearer in charge. Mr H. Seaman was appointed Officer-in-Charge. He operated from rented premises with a Ford Ambulance car.

In accordance with Brigade Rules, a Committee of seven members had to be elected by contributors to the Blackall Committee and at the 30 June 1925 the Committee consisted of C.W. Kingston (Chairperson), N. Banks (Hon Treasurer), W.E. Martin, W.A. Jackson, S. Orchard, T. Richardson and S. Holmers.

The Annual Report for 1925-26 disclosed that the Committee had purchased a suitable piece of land opposite the Oddfellows Hall, and hoped during the next year to have its own building which would be constructed by the Works Department. A suitable site had also been purchased at Jericho and the Ambulance building had been removed from the railway yards to the new site and had been doubled in size.

The Centre building at Blackall was constructed at a cost of a little over £2,000 including fencing and gates. The building was declared open by the Hon M.J. Kirwan (Minister for Public Works) assisted by the local member Mr F.W. Bulcock on 15 October 1927.

On 3 April 1931 Jericho became a self-governing Centre and Mr H. Seaman was appointed Superintendent. However, during 1932-33, the committee was forced, through lack of funds, to reduce the salary of the Superintendent who accepted the situation. But when he saw a better paid position open, he tendered his resignation and the service was carried along on a voluntary basis until 1955.

In 1933 Superintendent King, of Blackall, resigned and Mr W.G. Adrian was appointed in this stead. Superintendent Adrian passed away in 1934 and Ambulance Officer W.G. Inwood of Townsville was appointed to the vacant position.

Mr Sydney Orchard, who had been on the Committee from the inception of the Brigade in Blackall resigned from the Committee in 1939 and his son, Tom, joined the Committee in 1943. The late Tom Orchard served on the Committee for a period of 47 years and was awarded a British Empire Medal.

In March 1949, the Committee purchased a rail ambulance car from the Baralaba Centre for the sum of £100. In 1962 this rail car was redesigned at a cost of £500. This unit is still in use and is invaluable when roads are flooded.

After four years of fundraising the present Blackall Ambulance Centre building and Superintendents residence in Coronation Drive were constructed. The Centre building was officially opened by Mr Roy Hauff on 14 April 1984. The Committee at the time of the opening comprised of:

S.T. Orchard, B.E.M. (Chairperson)

R.K. Dudley (Deputy Chairperson)

A. G. Manttan

C.N. Anderson

K.J. Newitt

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G.L. Wheelhouse
S.G. Douglas
Superintendent R.G. McIllroy (Secretary)

Since the establishment of the service in Blackall the following officers have filled the position of Superintendent:

1923 – 1933 W.J. King
1933 – 1934 W.G. Adrian
1934 – 1936 W.G. Inwood
1936 – 1944 V.E. Medland
1944 – 1945 W.M. Whittington
1945 – 1952 J.A.C. Stibbs
1952 – 1962 K.R. Eagle
1962 – 1974 E.J. Parminter
1974 – 1980 N.G. Pegg
Present occupant Superintendent Bob McIllroy



Superintendent V Medland

Members of the present Committee are:

G.L. Wheelhouse (Chairperson)
A. Ghorayeb (Deputy Chairperson)
A.G. Manttann
J.J. Carter
W.H. Hannay
P.W. Skewes
B. O'Neil

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Honorary Centres attached to Blackall Centre:

Tambo Station

A Committee was formed in Tambo on 15 October 1973 for the purpose of establishing an Honorary Centre. Fundraising commenced and a Holden panel van ambulance vehicle was purchased for \$8,610. The service commenced in June 1976. Mrs Colleen Mullins, who was Secretary of the Foundation Committee, was appointed Honorary Administrator.

Applications for Honorary Ambulance Officers were invited and Bill Rogers, Bob Sargood, H. Sargood, Mark Sargood and Garry Galway were appointed by the QATB Blackall Committee.

Isisford Station

After approaches by the Isisford Shire Council on behalf of the citizens of that district to the Blackall Committee, a local committee was formed in February 1984 to investigate the feasibility of establishing an Honorary Centre in Isisford. After much deliberation, an Honorary Centre was opened on 24 May 1984.

A 1979 Holden panel van was purchased and three Honorary Bearers-Clarke Bond, Wayne Saxvik and Trevor Gilring - were appointed. Soon after Ken Tanner and Nor Abdul Rahman also joined the honorary staff.

Mrs Val Ray accepted the position of Honorary Administration Officer to assist Superintendent McIllroy in the Collection of Contributions.

Jericho Station

After meetings with representatives of the Queensland Bush Nursing Association and a public meeting in Jericho on 15 April 1989, a committee was formed to raise money to purchase an ambulance vehicle for the pending opening of an honorary centre.

Sufficient money was raised in a short time and a second-hand Ford Ambulance was purchased. The honorary staff consisted of Sister Ruth Fulmer, Greg Pearce and Viv Armstrong. Mrs Jayne James accepted the position of Honorary Ambulance Administrator.

Jundah Station

Following discussions with the Longreach Hospital Board and a public meeting in Jundah on 31 October 1989, it was agreed that an honorary centre be established in Jundah. Money was raised to purchase a second-hand Holden ambulance vehicle and the Honorary Centre was opened on 13 December 1989.

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The honorary staff consisted of Mr & Mrs Peters and Deborah Daly. These members were soon joined by Peter Dickson and Bronwyn Dickson. Deborah Daly and Bronwyn Dickson carry out the administrative duties.