

# *HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance*

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## *Biloela*

Prior to 1944, the only organised ambulance service to the Callide Valley was provided by the QATB Wowan Committee whose huge area of operation extended from just west of Mount Morgan to Eidsvold in the south.

Considerable use was made of rail motor services to transport patients to Mount Morgan and Rockhampton hospitals as during this period the Biloela hospital was no more than a cottage hospital.

In 1944. Due to the very generous donation by Mr James Lawrence (Rockhampton) and a loan of £300 from the QATB Executive Committee, the establishment of a Sub-Centre at Biloela by the Wowan Committee was made possible. Mr A.A. Simmonds, Chairman of the Biloela Sub-Centre Committee, stated in his first report that the total cost incurred in establishing the Sub-Centre was £554.

On 1 March 1944, Ambulance Officer Fred Windhaus of the Cairns Centre took up duty as Officer-in-Charge of the Biloela Sub-Centre.

The first vehicle was a Buick sedan. The rear seats had been removed and a floor and cupboards had been installed. Patients on stretchers were loaded via the boot.

A public meeting was held in the School of Arts on 21 March 1944 to form a Provisional Committee for the Sub-Centre.

The duties of the Provisional Committee were terminated on 1 April 1945 when, by Order-in-Council, the Sub-Centre was gazetted as a Centre and the following persons appointed to the Committee: R. Snell, I.M. Willey, A.A. Simmonds (Chairperson), A.A. Reinke (Deputy Chairperson), H. Williams, W.H. Olding and J. Wilson. Mr Albert Reinke (Deputy Chairperson) subsequently became Chairperson and served in that capacity for 15 years.

The first Superintendent of the newly established self-governing Centre was Superintendent Dan Gilvarry of the Mount Isa Centre. He commenced duty in June 1945 and during his first year of office he attended 488 patients and traveled 7381 miles. This was no mean feat when one considers the state of the roads and bridges at that time.

Superintendent Gilvarry served the Committee until October 1951. He then worked in other Queensland Centres and retired as Superintendent of Mount Isa Centre in 1972.

Biloela's second Superintendent was Mr Tom Tipper of Taroom Centre who later transferred to Burleigh Heads Centre in April 1955.

Biloela's third Superintendent was Mr Fred Leader of Wowan Centre who served for a 17 year period until his retirement in December 1972.



*First Superintendent D Gilvarry*

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The present Superintendent, Reg Brennan, was then appointed to the vacant position. The Centre continued its operation from rented premises until 1948 when the Committee purchased land opposite the Central Telegraph and then purchased a station homestead from the Rideout family of Blue Hills. This dwelling was removed to the Kroombit Street site, refurbished and renovated and became the Ambulance Headquarters until 1960. Mr F. Toomey was the builder who carried out the renovations at a cost of £700 and Mr F.A. Hill was the painter on the new 1948 premises. His account for repainting was £136 with the Centre having an insured value of £1,800.

In March 1956, the Goovigen Sub-Centre of the Wowan Centre came under the control of the Biloela Committee with Biloela's present Superintendent, Reg Brennan, as Officer-in-Charge. The Service at Goovigen continued until 1969 when sealed roads, bridges and population drift negated the need for a local service

It was during Superintendent Leader's term of office that rapid expansion took place with the construction of the Callide Dam and the Callide power house and the establishment of a local meat works. During this period, the staff at Biloela comprised a Superintendent and one Officer and an Officer-in-Charge at Goovigen.

Late in 1956 the Committee saw the need for larger premises and procured three blocks of land in Kariboe Str. from Mr R. Anderson for £1200 and moves were instituted for the construction of a new Ambulance Headquarters. The project met with a lot of local opposition from the 'city fathers' who deemed the project a 'white elephant' and a 'stone' around the neck of generations to come. The Biloela Ambulance Service then consisted of two officers and two vehicles. However, the Committee proceeded with the new Centre declaring the new structure must be of brick and capable of housing four cars. Large-scale mining was about to develop and this industry brought rapid population growth to Biloela and the small railway stop of Moura. The new Biloela Centre, opened by the President of the QATB State Executive Mr Hugh Millar in 1960, required major extensions in 1974 with a further major extension in 1980.

The opening of brigalow blocks in the Moura area had produced some growth. However, with the establishment of mining at Moura, the Moura township's population rose from 100 to 3500 in a matter of 18 months. This rapid growth made a local Ambulance service from Moura a necessity and plans for this service were well under way in the early 1960s.

The Biloela Committee at this time was fully extended financially by the Biloela Centre building debt and the need to provide additional staff and vehicles to service the area. The task of funding the Moura service was a major challenge for the Biloela Committee. (In those times, funding for expansion was still the responsibility of local committees.)

A Building Committee was formed at Moura presided over by Mr Graham Christensen. Other Members included Clem Davy, Fred Luhrs, the Mayfields and the Elliotts with Superintendent Leader and Bert Smith raising thousands of pounds via the now onerous 'chook raffles'. In 1966, the Moura Sub-Centre was opened free of debt by Mr Clem Davey who donated the last \$2000 on Opening Day to achieve this.

Bert Smith, Moura's first Officer-in-Charge, has since retired from the Service. He was followed by Terry Boyd, now Superintendent of Gladstone; George Bryant, now Superintendent of Theodore; Bob



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Sunnerdale, since retired; Kent Larsen, now Superintendent of Goondiwindi; Greg Hardy, now Superintendent of Toogoolawah and Moura's present Officer-in-Charge Kev Rapley.

The Moura Officers had it rough in those early days with a large and active population and no doctor or hospital. The nearest medical services were 70 kilometers away at Biloela. They were fortunate in having the support of Evan and Hazel Matthes. Hazel later became the Nursing Superintendent of the Moura Hospital.

The Biloela Committee has been foremost in progressive attitudes and, in 1954 was one of the first Committees to install oxygen equipment in its vehicles. Earlier vehicles were fitted with aircraft jet ventilation. It introduced the F100 Ambulances in 1972 and, in 1973, was one of a few Committees employing a Cadet. Regular staff training was introduced in 1973 and, in the same year, the Committee installed a Heavy Rescue Unit (which has been upgraded several times). A Light Rescue Unit is maintained at Moura.

Since the establishment of Biloela as a self-governing Centre, the following persons have filled the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

**1945 – 1949**     A.A. Simmonds

**1949 – 1964**     A.A. Reinke

**1964 – 1966**     G.J. Christensen

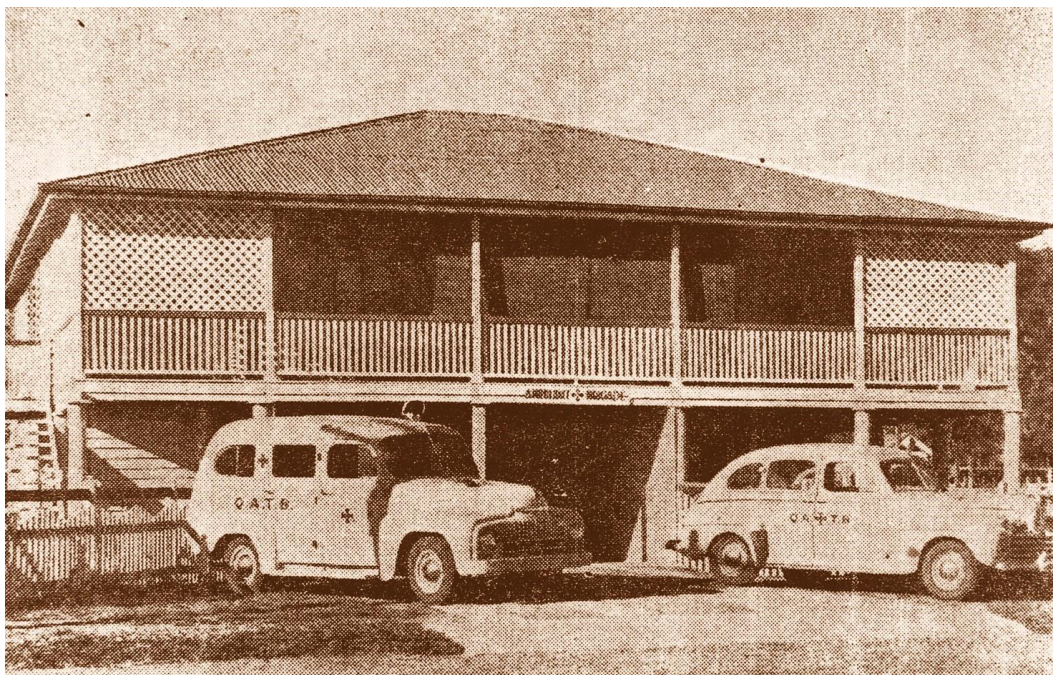
**1966 – 1967**     S.D. Godfrey

**1967 – 1970**     E.M. Shields

**1970 – 1976**     H.C. Amos

**1976 – 1979**     W.C. Anderson

**Present occupant**     Chairperson     Alan Beahan



*First Centre building*