

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Brisbane

An accident on the Brisbane showgrounds in Show Week of August 1892, gave birth to the idea of the need for a civil ambulance service. It was Mr I.G. Echlin, a rider in the Maiden Hunter's Cup, who supplied the incentive when he had the misfortune to sustain a simple fracture of the left leg when his horse fell and rolled on him. Dr Sandford Jackson, the Superintendent of the Brisbane General Hospital and Mr Seymour Warrian of the Ambulance Corps of the Queensland Defence Force were at the ringside, but before either could reach the patient he was picked up, without any treatment and placed in a Molly Brown Cab 'four-wheeled horse drawn vehicle with a small entrance in the rear' and he was driven to Hospital. Through the lack of skilled assistance, the untrained bystanders had unfortunately been instrumental in converting the simple fracture into a compound one.

Being dissatisfied and disgusted with the treatment of Mr Echlin, Mr Warrian was prompted to try to improve matters for future accidents and mentioned the matter to his comrades in the Army Medical Corps. A meeting was arranged at the residence of Mr Warrian, Boggo Road on 12 September 1892. Present at the meeting were: S. Warrian, E. Jack, Geo Windle, W. Tomkins, F. Rudd, A. Beaston, J. Brown, E. Slaughter, F. Higginbotham, W.G. Daniel, W. Hargreaves, J. Siegman, J. Marlow, A. Clothier and E.J. Smith. They decided to found the City Ambulance Transport Brigade. Mr G. Windle was appointed Secretary and deputed to interview the racing clubs regarding support and the attendance of Brigade members at race meetings. Mr Eustace Jack was requested to arrange office accommodation and Mr Seymour Warrian was appointed leader. Mr A. Beaston offered to build a stretcher because the one in use had been borrowed from the military and was very heavy.



*Dr James Booth, first Superintendent of the
CATB*

Dr James Booth, who was greatly interested in the Ambulance movement, interviewed the Manager of the Brisbane Newspaper Company who granted the use of rooms in the Courier building.

Bearers on night duty slept on rolls of newspaper on the floor. The first bed linen, supplied by the Immigration Department, was printed with the Government broad-arrow stamp, which was regarded by the pioneers as their family crest.

With a borrowed stretcher, a homemade bandage winder, a stock of unbleached calico and stout hearts, the four officers (Seymour Warrian, Eustace Jack, Geo Windle and William Tomkins) were ready for duty.

Furniture was at a premium. However, the staff of four made themselves as comfortable as possible and, with the aid of a few packing cases, settled down to work and had not long to wait to show their mettle.

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During this time Dr R. Rendle, writing to the Brisbane Courier on 1 November 1892 regarding a fatal accident at the Australian Hotel, pointed out the absence of a stretcher at the Police or Fire Stations, and urged support for the CATB.

The first patient was transported from Taringa to a private hospital at New Farm on 5 November 1892. The stretcher carrying was aided by straps over the shoulders of the Bearers. Lady friends of the patient carried sunshades over his head.

The minutes of the first official meeting of the CATB show it was held on 22 December 1892, in the Courier building. Those present, were W. Hargreaves, W.H. Jones, A. Beaston, F. Higginbotham, J. Brown, W.G. Daniel, J.V. Harris, F. Rudd, G. Windle, C.W. Elliott, E. Jack, S. Warrian, W.C.T Tomkins and Dr J. Booth.

At this meeting, a resume of the work done from 1 October to 12 December included attendances at 11 race meetings at Breakfast Creek, two at Eagle Farm for Queensland Turf Club, two at Eagle Farm for Tattersalls, one street accident and the transport from Taringa previously mentioned, and the report was signed by officers Jack, Warrian and Harris.

It was then resolved that a Brigade be formed taking for its title 'The City Ambulance Transport Brigade'. The election of officers resulted in the following appointments: President, Hon A.J. Thynne MLC (who held this position until his death in 1927); Vice-Presidents, Doctors Tilston, E.S. Jackson, Marks, Griffen, Webb, Hoggan and Owen; Superintendent, Dr James Booth, captain Eustace Jack; First Lieutenant, C.W. Elliott, Second Lieutenant, F. Rudd; Hon Secretary, J.C. Harris; and Hon Treasurer Seymour Warrian (who was later appointed instructor). W.C. Hargreaves and W. H. Jones were delegated the task of drawing up a set of rules.



CATB officers after a practice session 1895 (from left) G Agnew, E Slaughter, R Lowry, S Warrian and R Nye Stevens

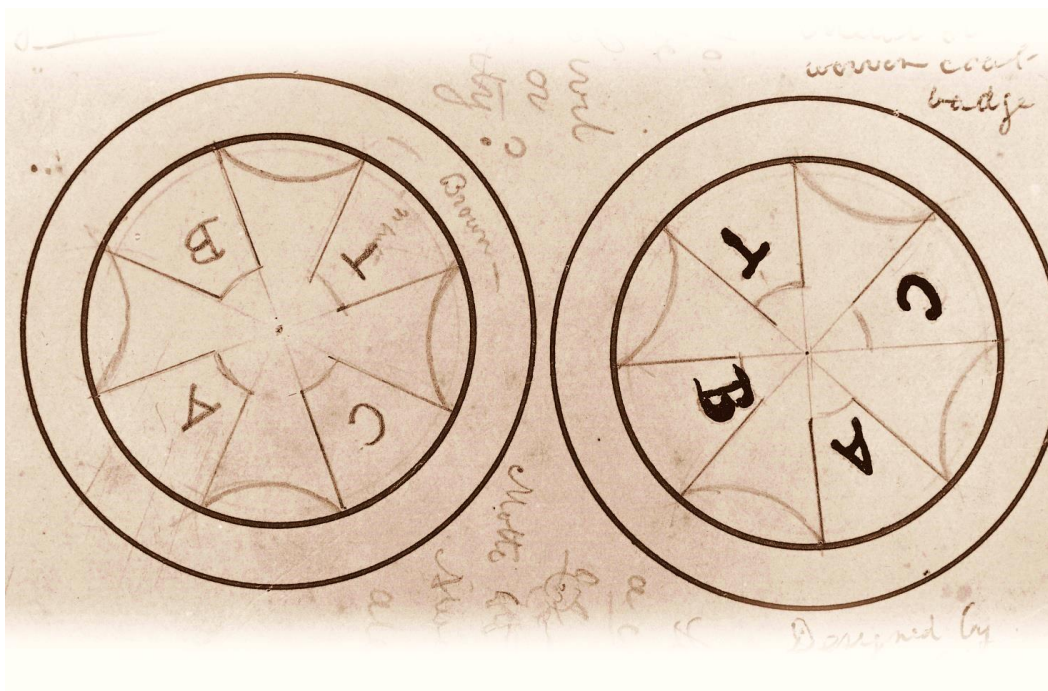
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Up to this time no telephone was installed owing to lack of funds but in January 1893, Elliott Bros. very kindly presented the Brigade with a telephone and, at a meeting held on 18 January 1893, the Secretary reported that the telephone was connected with the telephone exchange as Number 177.

W. Hargreaves was the first honorary collector and his first subscription was from Mr J.M. Campbell who was later to become Chairperson of the Brisbane Committee.

With the increase in the number of patients, it became necessary to have some means of transport and it was decided to have a litter built on plans drawn up by Seymour Warrian and Eustace Jack. Because the funds in hand were insufficient, the President guaranteed the balance of the costs. The building of the litter was entrusted to the Federal Carriage Co. of Elizabeth Street. The construction of the litter proved a tremendous boon, but even then, the bearers had to walk. It is recorded that when returning from hospitals, the bearers were permitted to sit on the steps of busses, towing the litter. Perhaps this gave rise to the next move in the progress of transport - the use of a sulky, to which a litter was attached.

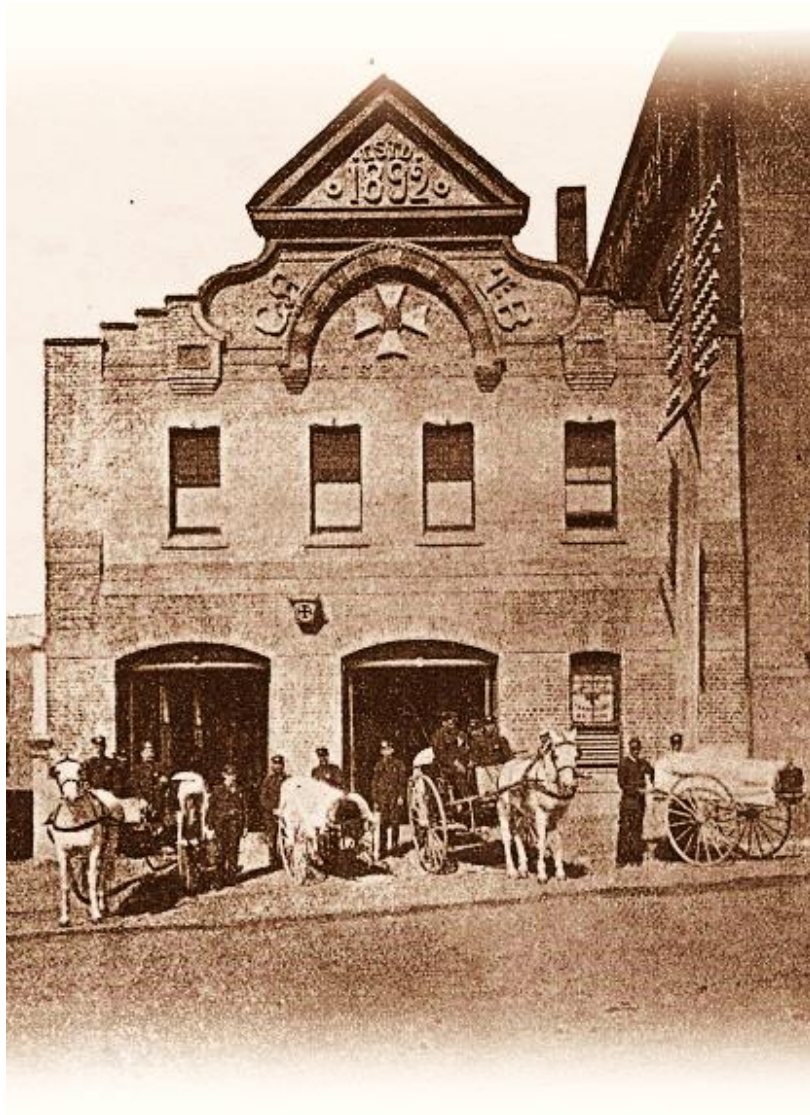
The Badge of the Brigade was also designed by Bearers Warrian and Jack while travelling to and from Ipswich for first aid instruction by Doctors Thornton and Geoghan.



Eustace Jack's sketches of the CATB insignia

During this period Drs E. Sandford Jackson and Owens offered financial support by generously holding themselves responsible for one month's wages to the staff.

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Head Centre, Elizabeth Street, 1895-1898

Dr James Booth resigned from the position of Superintendent and Mr C.W. Elliott was appointed Officer-in-Charge of the Brisbane Centre at £1 per week from January 1893; thus, he became the Brigade's first permanent officer. At this time, it was decided that military titles would no longer be maintained.

In March 1893, a second litter was added to the plant, and a fireworks display from which great things were expected proved a fiasco and involved the Committee so seriously that the last account contracted in the connection was not paid until late 1895.

During the flood of 1893 the Brigade provided most valuable service, and was brought more prominently to public notice.

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On March 10 1893, T.W. Taylor was admitted as a full-time officer, Mr Youngberg, H. Gray and W. Hargreaves as probationers, and W.C. Tomkins as Hon Treasurer in place of Seymour Warrian who had resigned.

Dr Jackson, as Medical Superintendent of the General Hospital, continued to assist and he allowed members of the paid staff to attend at the Outpatients Department where they obtained valuable experience.

At the close of 1893 the staff had dwindled down to eight, three paid bearers and five honorary bearers. Among the honorary bearers was Mr Richard Nye Stevens who was destined to play a large part in the organisation of the Brigade.

Caboolture blacksmith, David Boustead had his skill in first aid recognised by the Brisbane Committee in January 1894 when he was made an Honorary Ambulance Officer and asked to establish an Honorary Centre in Caboolture.

In February 1894 C.W. Elliott resigned as Officer-in-charge and Officer T.W. Taylor was appointed in his stead.

The rules were revised in May 1894 and the Working Committee was disbanded. Full control was given to a Committee of 12 members with Mr W. Soutter as the first Chairperson.

On 5 June 1894, the following appointments were made: Superintendent T.W. Taylor, Deputy Superintendent J.C. Harris, Senior Bearer W.C. Tomkins, Honorary Bearers R.N. Stevens, E.D. Slaughter, E.G. Slaughter, H. Gray, and W.G. Daniel. Later in the year Mr Daniel became a paid officer.

The provision of funds was a grave difficulty but the determination to carry on a free service never waned.



Mr Seymour Warrian founder of the CATB



CATB officers attending an injured boy (from left) W Tomkins, TW Taylor WG Daniels and G Agnew

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At this period, it became necessary to compound some of the salaries owing - at the rate of six shillings and eight pence in the pound. At this time the bearers often walked as much as 34 miles in one day, running to accidents, pushing the litter in all weathers. There was very little time off duty, with bearers being on duty every other night and alternate Sundays. Holidays were one week annually. Representations to the Government resulted in a grant of £100, which enabled the Committee to effect a settlement of wages arrears to the staff.

During 1895 the Brigade left the Courier building and leased premises in Elizabeth Street, a move made necessary by the growth of the institution. In this year, a most important development took place, the Home Secretary acceding to the request from the Committee to grant a Government subsidy of pound for pound on voluntary contributions.

The permanent staff was provided with uniforms (a gift from Mr Thomas Finney of Finney Isles & Co.). The uniform consisted of a blue serge tourist coat, blue serge trousers with piping, and cap. The CATB red cross metal badge was worn on the cap and coat. The duty badge (made of cloth) was worn on the right arm of the coat. The same type of uniform was worn for many years until the Superintendents in conference recommended a change with the open fronted tunic being regarded as more suitable.

Because of the number of accidents occurring at South Brisbane wharves, a branch station was opened at the old Fire Station in Stanley Street in September 1895 and Superintendent Taylor was transferred there. Officer George M. Agnew was then appointed superintendent of the Head Centre.

Towards the close of 1895, three members of the CATB - S.C. Warrian, K.J. Page, and W. McDermott - commenced ambulance operations in Sydney. While acting as First Aid Instructor to the Volunteer Fire Brigades of New South Wales, Seymour Warrian introduced for the first time the lifesaving drill, picking up and carrying helpless people from a burning building and applying artificial respiration.

It was in 1896 that Richard Nye Stevens was appointed Superintendent and Secretary at a salary of £2 10s per week, which was shortly after increased to £3 for a week of seven days. When he was absent on Sunday the Superintendent was required to find a substitute at his own cost.

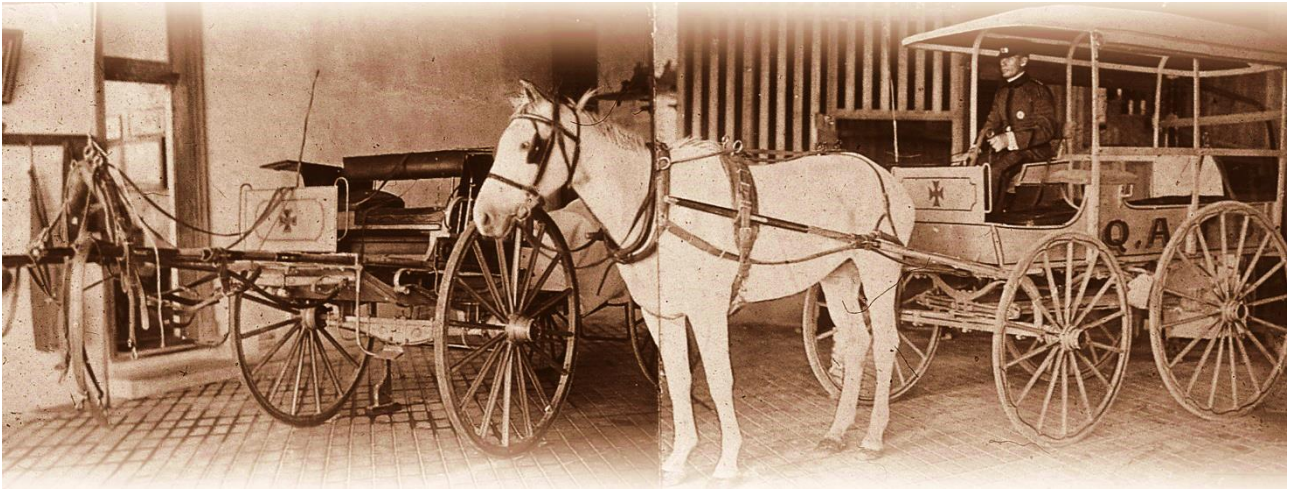
Also in this year, an Honorary Centre was established at Beaudesert under the control of Honorary Bearer F.L. Hargraves.

In November 1896, an invalid chair was purchased from penny subscriptions collected from 66 Sunday schools in and around Brisbane.

During the latter months of 1896 the Committee seriously contemplated opening a branch at Gympie, but meeting with little encouragement, the effort was abandoned.

In January 1897, the first of the white ponies and sulkies were purchased. The sulky only provided a means of getting to the case; the patient was still transported by pushing the litter.

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Ambulance sulky and wagon

In June 1897, the Home Secretary Sir Horace Tozer advised the Committee to apply to become incorporated under the Hospitals Act. The necessary application was made and approved. As a consequence, the name of the service became City Ambulance and Transport Brigade Hospital.

Sir Horace also advised the Committee that it should acquire its own property where the work of the Brigade could be carried out more efficiently than in leased premises.

Land in Wharf Street was purchased and tenders were called for a building in accordance with approved plans. The tender of Mr Walter Taylor for £1175 was accepted. The building, which was probably the first designed and built solely for ambulance purposes, was taken over from the contractor on 13 May 1898, and was at once occupied by the staff. Because of the immediate want of funds, the contractors estimate did not include anything beyond the actual dividing by partitions of any portion of the upper flat. The finishing of the whole of the interior was purposely left for the staff to work on. They immediately devoted all their energies to the fitting of electrical and other gearing to ensure prompt service where necessity demanded. Then, as funds became available, the upper floor was lined, painted and decorated, as time between calls permitted.

In November 1898, a fumigating shed was built at the rear of the centre, for the better disinfection of Brigade plant, which previously had been disinfected at the General Hospital.

At its meeting on 3 August 1899, the Committee granted the applications of Honorary Bearers R.P. Smith and R.B. Dalziel to open Honorary Centres at Thames Creek (near Warwick) and Nambour.

In addressing the subscribers present at the Annual Meeting held on 1 February 1900, the Hon R. Philp, Premier of Queensland said that he hoped to see some members of the Brigade accompanying the contingents to South Africa (Boer War). Ambulance Officers, however, were not requested by the military authorities until January 1902, when six of the staff volunteered and four were accepted for active service at the front.

In August 1900, the Secretary was instructed to prepare a report on the prospects and advisability of Brigade extension to the larger centres of population in Queensland. The report which advocated extension and advised financial assistance to the new branches, was adopted, and a motion carried in September to the effect that, *'The Superintendent, at the earliest convenient time shall proceed to Rockhampton,*

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Townsville, and Charter Towers, with a view to test the practicability of extending Brigade operations to those towns and to further report'.

In October, Townsville and Charters Towers were visited, resulting in Centres being formed in each town in December. Rockhampton Centre was opened in August 1901.

Warwick Centre, which began independently of the CATBH in 1900, accepted the offer of affiliation made by the Brisbane Committee in November 1901. Also in November, a Sub-Centre was opened in Ipswich.

In 1902, following the establishment of branch centres, it was decided to alter the name of the brigade to Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade Hospital.

Other branch centres established in the early 1900s were Toowoomba (1902), Mackay (1903), Ravenswood (1904), Cairns (1904), and Bundaberg (1907).

Superintendent Stevens died in March 1906. To the original members of the Brigade, and especially to Mr Stevens, belongs much of the credit for building up a great institution whose services have proved so valuable in Queensland. In the report of the Executive Committee for the year 1906, the President included the following:

"The Brigade suffered loss during the year by the death of Richard Nye Stevens, the General Secretary and Superintendent of the Head Centre, who entered the service in 1893, and was appointed Superintendent in March 1896, leaving a lasting record of his worth and inestimable work in the cause of ambulance in this State, and may his genius serve as a spur to all officers and men and may they benefit from his motto and example to be "Ready Always".

Mr Stevens was succeeded by Superintendent G.R. King of Townsville. Superintendent King retired in 1908, and his Deputy Superintendent, Edgar Slaughter was appointed in his stead.

Demands were being made on the Brigade to reach the scene of an accident more speedily and to have a more economical service. In 1908 the Committee decided to install motor traction and an order was placed with the Canada Cycle Agency Limited for a four-cylinder Clement Talbot Chassis. When the chassis landed in Brisbane, it was handed to the local coach builder to be fitted with a specially-designed body for ambulance work. This motor vehicle was placed in commission in May 1909.



First ambulance car built by a Brisbane firm. It carried bearers and litter

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By the close of 1908 other items of plant consisted of four horses, three sulkies, one ambulance wagon, three sets of harness, two invalid chairs, five litters and six collapsible stretchers.



First ambulance wagon used for country service

In 1909 the Brisbane Committee decided to sell the Wharf Street premises and to erect a new Centre building on the newly purchased site at the corner of Raff and Ann Streets.



Head Centre Ann Street, 1910-1974

Prior to moving to Ann Street, the Brigade was housed for some months in the Fire Brigade Station, which was located at the corner of Edward and Ann Streets.

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The Committee commenced operations from its new premises on 10 December 1910. Some alterations and additions were made in later years, but thanks to the foresight of those identified with the original project, the building was occupied for brigade purposes until 1974. In that year, it was sold to the Brisbane City Council in order to make way for the St John's Cathedral Square development. In 1911 the increasing amount of work performed by the Superintendent made necessary the appointment of another person to take over the duties of Secretary to the Brisbane Committee and also to act as General Secretary to the State Executive Committee.

In appointing a new General Secretary in 1918 the Executive Committee decided to separate the positions of Secretary to the Brisbane Committee and General Secretary of the Executive, to be held by two separate officials, because there was ample work in the Executive Office to keep one fully occupied.

Accordingly, the Superintendent of the Brisbane Centre assumed the dual position of Superintendent and Secretary, a role that had been found to be satisfactory at other centres.

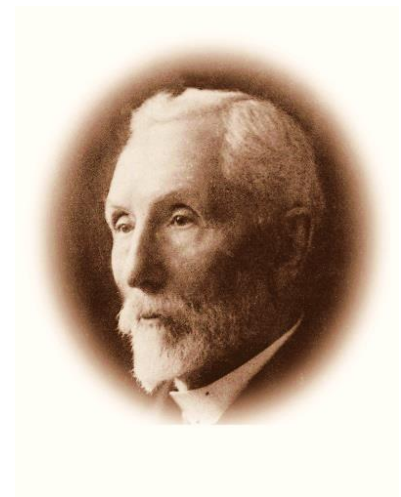
On Sunday 23 June 1974, Air Marshall Sir Colin Hannah, Governor of Queensland officially opened the present Ambulance Centre building in Boundary Street, Spring Hill.

Officers who have served in the position of Superintendent of the Brisbane Centre are:

1892 – 1893	Dr J. Booth
1893 – 1894	C.W. Elliott
1894 – 1895	T.W. Taylor
1895 – 1896	G.M. Agnew
1896 – 1906	R.N. Stevens
1906 – 1908	G.R. King
1908 – 1916	E.D. Slaughter
1916 – 1918	W.G. Daniel
1918 – 1936	W. Morse
1936 – 1952	A.E. Beech
1952 – 1965	T. Beech
1965 – 1989	R.W. Bartels

K.J. McPherson from 1989 until his appointment as Deputy Commissioner (Operations) Queensland Ambulance Service.

Between 1892 and May 1894 meetings were chaired by C.W. Elliott, F. Rudd, E. Jack, Hon A.J. Thynne, Dr B. Hoggan, and Dr E.S. Jackson.



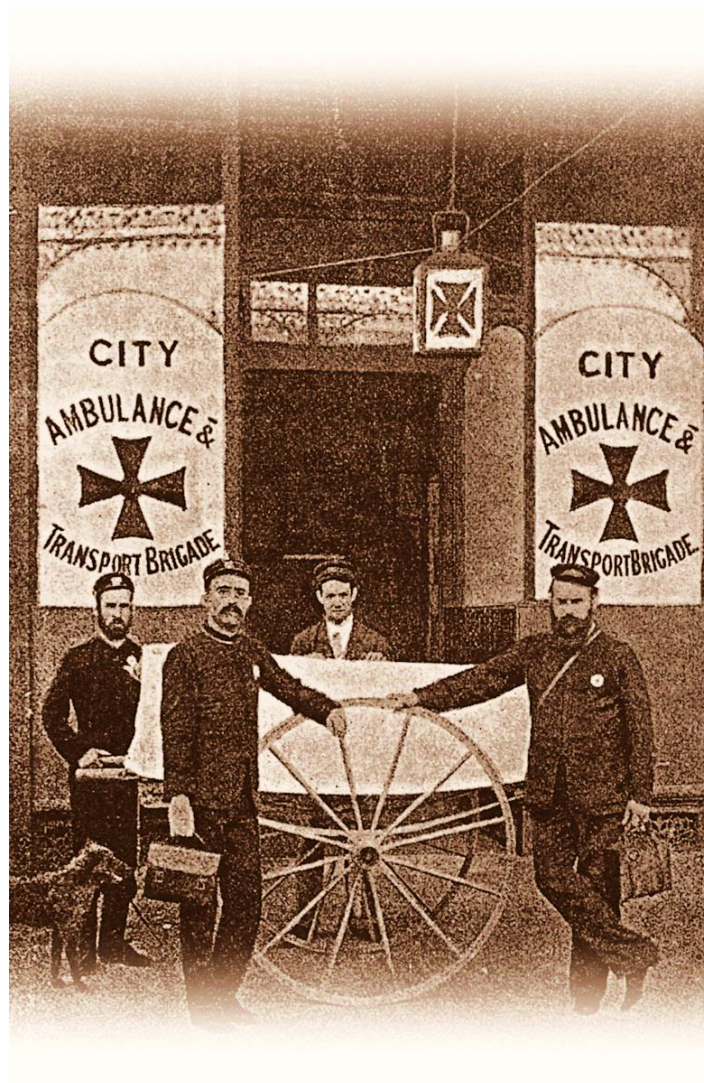
*Col AJ Thynne, President of the
Brigade 1892-1927*

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Chairpersons

Since June 1894 the following people have filled the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

1894 – 1896	W. Soutter
1896 – 1906	J.M. Campbell
1906 – 1911	W.H. Bell
1911 – 1912	A. Corrie
1912 – 1916	W.D. Grimes
1916 – 1928	M. Baldwin
1928 – 1931	D.S. Carter
1931 – 1935	W.D. Grimes
1935 – 1946	W. Richardson
1946 – 1952	F.A. Robinson
1952 – 1971	J.A. Turner
1971 – 1973	R.B. Loxton
1973 – 1979	J.C. Arkell (MBE)
1979 – 1991	I.H.C. Thomson



Wharf Street Headquarters, 1909-1910