

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Cairns

At its meeting held on 8 March 1899 the Brisbane Centre Committee of the City Ambulance and Transport Brigade promoted probationer Henry Miller to Honorary Membership. Then on 8 January 1901 the Committee approved the request of Honorary Bearer Miller to open an Honorary Centre in Cairns.

The following is an extract from a letter dated 9 January 1901 from the Superintendent of the Brisbane Centre to Honorary Bearer H. Miller whose address was care of D. Mackay, Abbott Street, Cairns: 'I have the honour to inform you that it was decided to grant your request to recognise you in future as the Honorary Representative of this Brigade in Cairns. I shall record your Centre at Cairns as existing on all Brigade documents.'

At the time the only other towns outside of Brisbane to have CATB Services were Charters Towers and Townsville, (Branch Centres) Caboolture and Nambour (Honorary Centres).

The following article appeared in the Cairns Morning Post of Tuesday 30 July 1901.

'The prompt action and useful aid rendered by Mr Miller (at one time a member of the Brisbane Ambulance Brigade) towards the injured man in the buggy accident on Sunday last, should act as an incentive to the formation of a local ambulance brigade. We are sure that Mr Miller will be only too pleased to throw in the weight of his knowledge and experience into its promotion, and it only remains for some members of the Local Hospital to take the initiative in the matter.'



Premises 1927

At the Annual Meeting of the Brisbane Centre Committee held 6 February 1902 new rules were adopted and subsequently approved by the Governor in Council. A notable amendment to the rules of

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1897 was the change in the name of the organisation to 'Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade' - QATB.

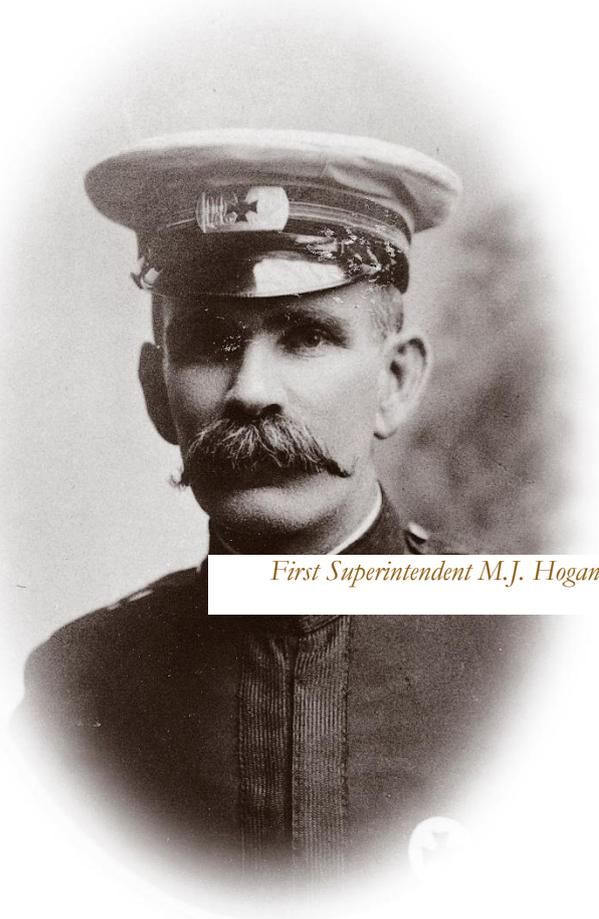
The last item of correspondence with Mr H Miller of the QATB Centre Cairns is dated 24 April 1902 and in his letter the General Secretary noted that Mr Miller was being assisted by Honorary Member May.

No mention of the service in Cairns was made in the Brisbane Centre's Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 1902 therefore it can be assumed that Brigade operations in Cairns terminated in that year.

The wages book of the Brisbane Centre shows that Henry Miller commenced duty on the permanent staff of that Centre in May 1902. The same Henry Miller was appointed the first Superintendent of Bundaberg Centre in 1907.

Early in May 1904 Mr M.J. Hogan (lately a member of the honorary staff of Charters Towers Centre) arrived in Cairns with the objective of forming an Ambulance Brigade in the town. He found a great amount of prejudice existed so from May to mid-September of that year he made himself known to the public by attending football matches and other sporting events and rendering first aid to the injured. During that time he was called upon to transport many sick and injured people to the Hospital. The local Hospital Committee, after a little persuasion, decided to permit him to use its litter, which was housed at the Fire Station, provided it was kept in good condition and returned each time it was used. This litter, which had been purchased from the Brisbane Ambulance in 1897, was subsequently donated to the Centre in 1908.

In September 1904 Mr Hogan received permission from the Mayor of Cairns, Donald McLachlan, to call a public meeting of citizens to discuss the formation of an Ambulance Centre. This meeting was called for the night of 26 September 1904 in the Chess Room of the School of Arts building, and was a very representative one. Among those present were His Worship the Mayor (who occupied the Chair), W.S. Prewett (Railway Traffic Manager), Police Inspector Durham, F.



First Superintendent M.J. Hogan

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Barrett (Head Teacher State School), Fire Chief T. Bothamley, A.F. Mohr (Secretary Cricket Association), T. Seaton (Wharf Labourer's Union), D. Bolton (Wharf Labourer), A.W. Chisholm (Cairns Argus Newspaper) and M.J. Hogan.

The Mayor explained the purpose of the meeting, pointing out that the town would benefit from the formation of an ambulance brigade and that the service would be supported by the majority of the public. After other speakers voiced their opinion of the benefits to be derived, Mr Hogan recounted his experience of ambulance work and pointed out the need of a Brigade in a town like Cairns. During the short period since his arrival in the town he had responded to 116 calls of various kinds. After discussion a motion was carried 'that in the opinion of this meeting it is desirable to form a branch of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade in Cairns'. It was also resolved that Mr Hogan (Acting Secretary pro tem) would advise the Executive Committee of the QATB in Brisbane of the decision of the meeting and request it to give effect to the wishes of those present.

On 8 October a telegram was received from the General Secretary (Superintendent R. Stevens of the Brisbane Centre) to the effect that he was leaving on the 'Marloo' for Cairns and would arrive on the 16th. Mr Stevens attended a public meeting on the night of 17 October and, after thanking the local residents for the manner in which he had been welcomed, stated that he had the full power of the State Executive to act in all matters relating to the formation of a Branch Centre in Cairns. He said he had much pleasure in declaring the Cairns Centre of the Brigade open and he offered to supply the Centre with a complete litter, stretcher and material and, if necessary, financial assistance. At this meeting Mr Hogan was appointed Superintendent and Secretary at a salary of £2,10s per week and residence for the first three months. The Provisional Committee consisted of Ald D. McLachlan (Chairperson) and W.S. Prewett (Hon Treasurer), F. Barrett, A.W. Chisholm, A.F. Mohr, T. Bothamley, D. Bolton, T. Seaton, J.H. Bean, R. Burns, G. Sparks and Police Inspector Durham. Keirle, Rheuben, Adamson, Gorton and Bolton were appointed Honorary Probationers to assist the Superintendent.

The sub-committee which had been appointed to inquire into the matter of Brigade quarters tendered a report at a special meeting of the Provisional Committee on 29 October 1904. Members of the sub-committee explained that they had visited different localities within a certain radius of the Post Office but could not find a more suitable place than that occupied by Mrs Stamp in Lake Street (next door to the Palace Hotel). A letter was produced signed by Mrs Stamp offering premises at 29 shillings per week with the use of partitions, gas fittings and stove for a period of nine months. The offer was accepted.

Following the proclamation of the Branch Centre on 4 July 1905 a Committee of seven members was elected in accordance with Brigade Rules. This Committee comprised D. McLachlan (Chairperson), W.S. Prewett (Hon Treasurer), F. Barrett, H.K. Durham, R. Burns, J. Laurance and L. Jeppeson. The Brigade entered its first quarters on 2 November 1904. In June 1906 the Commissioner for Railways advised that the Governor-in-Council had approved a 20-year lease to the Brigade at £5 per year, for an allotment of land at the corner of Spence and Sheridan Streets.

Plans and specifications were prepared for Brigade quarters and approved at a meeting on 21 September 1906. At the monthly meeting of the Committee held on 13 October 1906 (just two years after the inception of the Brigade in Cairns), the tender of Page and Lambert for £397 was accepted. On 26 January 1907 Chairperson Mr D. McLachlan officially opened the Centre, free of debt showing that in less than two years the Brigade was in a sound financial position. In April of the following year the premises were fenced, and the allotment filled in making it high and dry.

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Centre opening 1907

In July 1907 the Committee directed the Secretary to write to Honorary Bearers Jas Scott and E.J. Greening of Atherton notifying them that the Committee would assist in the formation of an Honorary Centre provided they intended to reside in Atherton. In the following month Mr Greening was appointed to take charge of the Honorary Centre and he was paid 1s 6d per hour with a maximum payment of 12 shillings per day for time lost from his place of employment while on ambulance work. In late 1907 an Honorary Centre was opened at Gordonvale (then known as Nelson) with Mr P.C. Kendrick in charge and in October 1908 a further Honorary Centre was opened at Chillagoe with Honorary Bearers Hoban and Barron in charge.

In February 1909 the white pony 'Dash' was purchased. This horse cost £12 and was admired by thousands for its pace, action and intelligence.

On 17 August 1909 it was resolved to call tenders for Brigade quarters at Atherton, and also to convert the Atherton and Chillagoe Honorary Centres into Sub-Centres in the charge of paid officers. Mr Allan Knudson was appointed the first Deputy Superintendent in charge at Atherton; Mr William Hoban was appointed as Deputy at Chillagoe. In 1917, Officer Hoban became the first Superintendent of the Innisfail Centre.

The year 1910 saw the openings of a Sub-Centre at Kidston (with Senior Bearer E. Greene temporarily in charge) and Honorary Centres at Wolfram (with Honorary Bearer Malcolmsen in charge) and Russell Pocket. Also, the Honorary Centre at Gordonvale was converted to a Sub-Centre and Officer E. Greene placed in charge with the rank of Deputy Superintendent.

During 1911 the Brigade organised an Art Union in aid of the Cairns Hospital building fund. As the result the sum of £390 was handed over to the Committee. Together with nearly £60 received from

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two excursions, this amount was subsidised by the Government at the rate of 150 percent. The casualty ward at the Hospital was subsequently named Ambulance Ward in recognition of the fundraising efforts.

In November 1911 it was resolved to open a Sub-Centre at Innisfail with Deputy Superintendent J.A. Johnston in charge. In January 1912 an Honorary Centre was opened at Babinda with Honorary Member F.H. Browning in charge and at the monthly meeting in February the separation of the Atherton Sub-Centre as a Branch Centre was approved by the Committee.

Superintendent Hogan resigned in 1914, his position being filled by Mr A.E. Kennett, a Deputy Superintendent attached to the Warwick Centre. In May 1914 Mr Kennett went to the war as a Sergeant in the Army Medical Corps and Mr Hogan accepted the position as locum tenors for Superintendent Kennett. Unfortunately Superintendent Kennett yielded up his life in France through illness on 31 December 1916 just nine days after the death of his father Mr J.D. Kennett who was Superintendent of the Warwick Centre. Mr Hogan then accepted a permanent appointment. In May 1914 a Sub-Centre was opened at Babinda and Dr D.A. Grakovitch was placed in charge.

The Sub-Centres at Babinda and Gordonvale were converted to independent Centres in 1916 and in the following year a similar transition occurred at Innisfail.

The first motor ambulance purchased by the Cairns Committee was a 1918 Hupmobile. Angus McDonald (father of the current Assistant Commissioner Malcolm McDonald) transferred to Cairns from the Rockhampton Centre in 1917 and, being a competent motor driver, was placed in charge of the new vehicle.

In response to an invitation from the residents of Mount Garnet in July 1921, Superintendent Hogan visited the town and attended a public meeting called for the purpose of discussing ways and means of establishing an ambulance Sub-Centre.

Subsequently a Sub-Centre was opened on 3 September 1921 and Bearer Robert W. Hughes of Charters Towers Centre placed in charge with the rank of Deputy Superintendent. This Sub-Centre was closed in September 1924 due to the unsatisfactory state of its finances.

On Monday 19 September 1921 at 9.25 a.m. a fearful explosion took place in the Mount Mulligan Coal Mine and every man in the mine perished. Superintendent Hogan organised the first relief party in Cairns, and left for Mount Mulligan about 4.00 p.m. that day. He was accompanied by the Brigade Superintendents from Gordonvale, Babinda and Atherton, his Deputy Superintendent H. Andersen and Honorary Bearers P.O. Francis, M. Treacy and D. Johnstone. Other members of the party were Inspector Daly and Detective Keirnan of the Police Department and 17 Cairns waterside workers. Since the establishment of ambulance services in Mareeba in 1941 the residents of Mount Mulligan have been serviced by that Centre.

In November 1922 the Sub-Centre at Chillagoe was converted into a self-governing centre and the Officer-in-Charge (Deputy Superintendent Jas. Murphy) was appointed Superintendent and Secretary. In 1929 owing to the poor financial position of the Chillagoe Centre, the Home Secretary decided that it would be necessary for the ambulance to be taken over by the Hospital Board, because it was considered that funds could not be provided in the district to maintain the two services. The QATB

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Superintendent of the day Mr Norman Parker was successful in gaining employment as an Ambulance Officer with the Atherton Committee.

At its meeting on 12 February 1926 the Cairns Committee approved plans prepared by the Department of Works for a new brick building to be erected at the corner of Aplin and Sachs (now Grafton) Streets, Cairns. The estimated cost was £9,700. The new building was officially opened on 6 February 1927 by the Mayor (Ald A.J. Draper) in the presence of a large gathering of citizens and visitors. Train excursions were run from Innisfail and Atherton districts to celebrate the occasion. During the afternoon the sum of £500 was received in cash and promises. However, the Committee's appeal for funds was slowed considerably by the arrival of a cyclone on 9 February which caused much destruction to the city and suburbs.



Superintendent L.B. Clark

In 1933 Superintendent Hogan resigned and Senior Bearer Les Clark was appointed to the vacant position. Superintendent Clark proved to be probably the most progressive officer the Brigade has seen. He was responsible for a range of valuable initiatives. These included the combined centres Art Unions involving Committees from the area north of Tully and the organising of Zonal and State Conferences of Committees. He was also responsible for the manufacture of hatch-back ambulance vehicles (the first being a 1936 Dodge), the establishment of a blood transfusion service in 1938 (in later years taken over by the Red Cross Society), and the establishment of an aerial ambulance service with attendant radio communications with residents of the Gulf Country and Cape York Peninsula.

The first aerial ambulance trip was made on 9 January 1937 when the Committee chartered Mr Tom McDonald's aircraft to transport a child patient from Cooktown to Cairns.

In 1945 the Committee decided to operate its own aerial service and the first aircraft was a Dragon DH 84A which was purchased from the Disposals Commission at a cost of £670. The final cost to equip the aircraft, including radio, was £1,500. This aircraft was lost at Palmerville during take-off (due to atmospheric conditions) on 23 February 1949. The next aircraft, a Rapide was lost in the sea near Double Island on 26 November 1951 bringing a patient from Vanrook Station. On this occasion the patient was drowned after an heroic struggle by Ambulance Officer Keith Howarth and Pilot Captain Neville Hicks to keep him afloat.

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First ambulance aircraft

This aircraft was replaced by another Rapide which was subsequently lost at sea on 26 October 1953. The pilot (C.R. (Dick) Bampton) and patient (a lad from Lockhart River Mission who was suffering from snakebite) were both drowned. The ambulance officer A.W. (Andy) Cousar was picked up from the open sea by the sugar freighter 'Fiona' near Hinchinbrook Island approximately six hours later. Another Rapide and other types of aircraft were later used.

Following the transfer of the Royal Flying Doctor Service from Charters Towers to Cairns and considering the cost of maintaining its aerial service, the Committee, with the approval of the QATB State Council and the Department of Health, decided to cease its aerial ambulance functions in 1979. A Sub-Centre was opened at Edmonton in February 1946 and was operated from rented premises. The Officer-in-Charge was Senior Ambulance Officer R.P. Fleming who at the time of his retirement was Superintendent of the Atherton Centre. The following year Mr A.G. (Gordon) Mann donated a parcel of land upon which a Sub-Centre could be built. A brick building was subsequently erected and officially opened in September 1951 by Mr G.W. Davison, Chairperson of the Cairns Committee. On 29 July 1950 a Sub-Centre was established on Thursday Island to work in conjunction with the local Hospitals Board and Ambulance Officer W. Bowman of Mount Isa was appointed Officer-in-Charge. This Sub-Centre became a self-governing Centre on 14 December 1953. September 1951 saw the appointment of Senior Bearer E. Bradley to the position of Deputy Superintendent. Ernie Bradley left the Centre in 1956 because of his appointment as Superintendent of Nanango. He became State Secretary in 1965.

In May 1952 Superintendent Clark resigned following his appointment as Superintendent of the Rockhampton Centre. He was replaced by Mr T. Briggs, Superintendent of the Gordonvale Centre. Superintendent Tom Briggs MBE retired in 1973 and his Deputy Superintendent Keith Howarth was appointed to the vacant position. After serving as Superintendent and Secretary from 1973 to 1988 Mr Howarth retired, and the present Superintendent Geoff Reynolds (formerly Superintendent of Yeppoon-Emu Park Centre) was appointed in his stead.

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In 1986, a Benefit committee was formed to raise funds for the establishment of a Sub-Centre at Smithfield. The Chairperson of this Committee was Mr Fred Gibson, a member of the Cairns Committee and a former Deputy Superintendent of that Centre.

The Sub-Centre building cost \$377,816 and was officially opened by Mr Martin Tenni MLA on 13 June 1987.

Since the establishment of the Cairns Centre in 1904 the following people have filled the position of **Chairperson of the Committee:**

1904 – 1908	D. McLachlan
1908 – 1909	J. Griffiths
1910 – 1912	Dr. C.C. Baxter Tyrie
1912 – 1913	Dr. P.J. Kerwin
1914 – 1923	W.S. Prewett
1923 – 1926 and	
1927 – 1931	J.G. Wilks
1926 – 1927	F.W. Landy
1931 – 1933	J. Fulton
1933 – 1949	G. Owens
1949 – 1966	G.W. Davison
1966 – 1976	H.W. Westaway
1976 – 1982	F.J. Kelly
1982 – 1984	Dr. D.A. Logan
1984 – 1985	J. Pezzutti
1985 – 1988	L.A. Smyth
Since 1988	J. Pezzutti