

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Gympie

*I*n ambulance service in Gympie was first rendered to the citizens by the ambulance section of the Gympie Defence Force which was stationed in Gympie with its parent body, the Wide Bay Defence Corps stationed in Maryborough.

In the year 1893, the Gympie Corps received orders from headquarters to disband. These disbanded men tried to form an ambulance among themselves, but for the want of monetary assistance, their zealous efforts failed. Another effort was made by sending lists to the management of all gold mines requesting employees to subscribe two shillings and sixpence per year; this also failed.

An ambulance was formed in 1902 and the officer was stationed in a room at the Atlantic Hotel in Mary Street. Records show that the first patient to be treated was in September of that year. The patient had sustained a fractured forearm. The officer in charge was Sergeant Major Fred Roffe late of the Army Medical Corps.

Later the Brigade moved its plant which consisted of a first aid kit and a stretcher to a room at the local fire station in Bligh Street.

Fred Roffe was appointed Superintendent and was assisted by Honorary Bearers C. Molton, J. Gray, G. Webster, F. Roffe (Jnr), D. Thomas, W. Bush, F.J. Frame (Jnr), R. Snook, G. Greentree, R. Pacey, C.F. Bandsley, J. Batz, T. McGill, C. Baker and A. Thrower.

Members of the first Committee were J. Geary (President), Mr Lilley (Vice President), W.E. Burbidge, E. Baker, W.G. Ambrose, H. Bocker, E.B. Davidson, M. Kearney, J. McSweeney and Secretary A.R. Ranson.



Committee and staff 1920's

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In 1904, the Committee purchased a residence in Crown Road to accommodate the Superintendent and his family, and erected an ambulance building on the adjoining land. The plant comprised a two-wheel Ashford litter and five stretchers.



Premises Crown Road, Book - History of Queensland

In 1908, a second Ashford Litter was purchased and in 1911 a third was added to the plant. In May 1912, great joy was expressed when a horse and sulky was added to the plant and a second paid officer to the staff.

At the meeting of the Committee held on 20 October 1913, Mr Hubert Harris, General Secretary of the QATB, was introduced to those present, and laid before them reasons why the Gympie Brigade should affiliate with the QATB. Mr Harris dealt fully with the question pointing out tersely, the advantages that would accrue. He also believed that, as the work of the Gympie Brigade spread out, certain disadvantages would be met with. He said these disadvantages would disappear if affiliation took place. Three members spoke in favour of the idea and one was inclined to oppose it. The Chairperson (Ald P. Green) thanked Mr Harris for his attendance and stated that after discussion at a future meeting the Committee would communicate with QATB Headquarters.

An up to date Hupmobile Ambulance Car was purchased in May 1917 for the sum of £543. When the car arrived a Sports Meeting was held in Queens Park and children were given a ride around the ring in the Ambulance vehicle. A charge of three pence per ride was made. In May 1920, a second car was purchased - a T Model Ford which cost £347.

At a special meeting of subscribers held on 18 December 1922, it was decided that the Gympie Ambulance Transport Brigade should affiliate with the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade - the affiliation taking effect from 1 January 1923.

The first QATB Superintendent in Gympie was Lewis H. Dean who was ably assisted by 12 honorary officers. Lewis Dean had succeeded Fred Roffe who retired in July 1921 and became a member of the Committee.

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The first QATB Committee consisted of J.W. Hughes (Chairperson), P.J. Coombe (Hon Treasurer), W.E. Burbidge, W. Clark, J. Lovejoy, F. Roffe, R. Stitt, W.P. Watts, G.M. Webster and Secretary L. Birt. Superintendent Dean was mutually transferred to the Brisbane Centre for a period of three months to become fully conversant with first aid methods in vogue at that Centre and to have the opportunity of enhancing his motor mechanical and business knowledge. In the absence of Mr Dean, ambulance Officer H. Morse of the Brisbane Centre acted as Superintendent.

Following the departure of Mr Birt from the city in 1923, the secretaryship was transferred to Superintendent Dean.

In view of the increased workload during the first six months of operations as a QATB service, the Committee decided to appoint a second paid officer. The appointee was honorary bearer Roy Snook, who was given the rank of Deputy Superintendent. In 1943, Roy Snook was appointed Superintendent of the Yarraman Centre.

In 1943, the Committee investigated the possibility of erecting a new building on the site of the existing building in Crown Road. This proposal was found to be impracticable owing to the difficulty in financing such a scheme. The Committee then set about finding a more suitable site and raising funds to finance the erection of new building. By the end of the 1955-56 financial year, land in Nash Street had been purchased.

With the assistance of a Bank Loan, sufficient funds were available to erect new premises on the Nash Street property. The new Centre building was officially opened by the Premier of Queensland, the Honourable Frank Nicklin on 14 December 1959. The total cost of the Centre building, furniture and fittings and the Superintendent's residence was £18,700.

These premises are inadequate for present operations because of the increases in plant and staff resulting in the preparation of plans for new quarters to be erected at the corner of King and Alfred Streets.

Superintendent Lewis Dean retired in January 1969 and was succeeded by his Deputy Superintendent Mr Ron Lawrence.

In March 1978, a public meeting was held at Tin Can Bay to discuss and establish a Sub-Centre at that place. Some three years prior the Gympie Committee had made application to the Lands Department to have an area of land set aside for Ambulance purposes.

A local Benefit Committee was formed in 1978 with Mr A.B. (Ned) Kelly in the Chair and fundraising commenced to have an ambulance facility to service the Cooloola Coast region which encompasses Tin Can Bay, Cooloola Village, Rainbow Beach and the southern end of Fraser Island.

A Sub-Centre building was erected at Tin Can Bay and officially opened by the President of the QATB State Council (Mr J.S. Stodart) on 7 March 1981.

Since the establishment of the QATB service in Gympie, the following people have served in the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

January – August 1923

and 1943 – 1944 J.W. Hughes

1923 – 1924/1930 – 1931/1933 – 1934/

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1941 – 1942 and 1944 – 1946

P.J. Coombe

1924 – 1925

W.P. Watts

1925 – 1926/1934-35

and 1936 – 1938

R. Stitt

1926 – 1927

W.E. Burbidge

1927 – 1928

Dr A.E. Kelly

1928 – 1929

M.P. O'Neill

1929 – 1930

and 1942 – 1943

P.H. Bundesen

1991 – 1932

H.R. Taylor

1932 – 1933

Dr A.B. Cunningham

1935 – 1936

E. Lister

1947 – 1947

H.D. Enright

1947 – 1960

W.E.S. Gambling

1960 – 1978

Dr H.L. Kesteven

1978 – 1988

J.P. Balthes

Present occupant

Chairperson

A. Doust