Ingham

At the request of a number of citizens of Ingham T.E. Dwyer (Chairperson), J. Dumaresq (Committee Member) and Superintendent J. McIntosh of the Townsville Centre visited Ingham in 1921, with a view to extending ambulance operations to that town.

A public meeting was held, when it was unanimously resolved to establish a Sub-Centre immediately. Ambulance Officer A. Dawson of Townsville was appointed as Officer-in-Charge.

Following the resignation of Officer Dawson in 1923 Ambulance Officer E. Von Alpen was appointed Officer-in-Charge. Mr Von Alpen had previously served at Dalby, Southport and Atherton Centres. The Sub-Centre, which had been self-supporting since its inception, expressed a desire for self-government. In January 1925, the Chairperson and Superintendent of the Townsville Centre attended a public meeting in Ingham and urged that application be made to the Home Secretary for the establishment of a self-governing Centre. A provisional Committee was formed and an application was made, with the result that by Order in Council issued on 26 May 1925 Ingham was gazetted as a self-governing Centre.

First Superintendent E. Von Alpen

The Provisional Committee consisted of F. Fraser Snr (Chairperson), Rev Dr Kelly, E.F. Hayley, A.J. West, A.E. Aitkin (Treasurer), J.J. Connolly and Mesdames A. Spencer, McLeod Snr and Hunter.

It is interesting to note that Mr Frank Fraser, described by the Rev Canon F.G. Williams (Chairperson of the Townsville Committee at the time) as a canny Scotsman who 'not only advised others to give, but showed the way to give himself', was to pass on his generous nature to his grandson Lex Fraser. Lex Fraser became a major contributor to the new Centre constructed in Ingham in 1986 with a donation of $10,000 towards the purchase of land.

Officer E. Von Alpen the Officer-in-Charge of the Sub-Centre was appointed Superintendent of the newly established Centre on the recommendation of the Promotion Board in Brisbane.

The service operated from rented premises in the main street. A request for first aid material to be held by the Halifax-Macknade Progress Association was considered and refused in late 1925. However, the determination and persistence of Lower Herbert residents to have some local ambulance service available, was to finally pay off many years later when a Sub-Centre was constructed at Halifax.

First premises

Co-operation between Centres became a feature of ambulance life, with the Townsville Centre on one occasion lending the Ingham Centre a vehicle to allow the Ingham car to undergo repairs. The steady increase in the number of patients treated and mileage travelled was apparently beginning to take toll in wear and tear.

The year 1924-1925 was to see an increase of 691 in the number of patients treated and transported over the previous financial year, a statistic which was to lead later in the year to call for an assistant to the Superintendent.

At the first Annual General Meeting in July 1925 the Chairperson's Report included the following:

> 'At present as you are aware we have no ambulance building and the premises we are renting are very inadequate and wholly unsuitable for our requirements. Your Committee has had plans of a very suitable building drawn up to an estimated cost of £2,000; these plans have been forwarded to the Works Department and we are now awaiting their approval. We hope to be able to proceed with the erection of same immediately. The building when completed will be a decided acquisition to the town and district.'

In 1926 the permanent staff was increased to two with the appointment of Ambulance Officer Vivian Anderson at a salary of £5,10s ($11) per week. In the same year, a new six-cylinder Buick ambulance vehicle was purchased for £465 ($930).

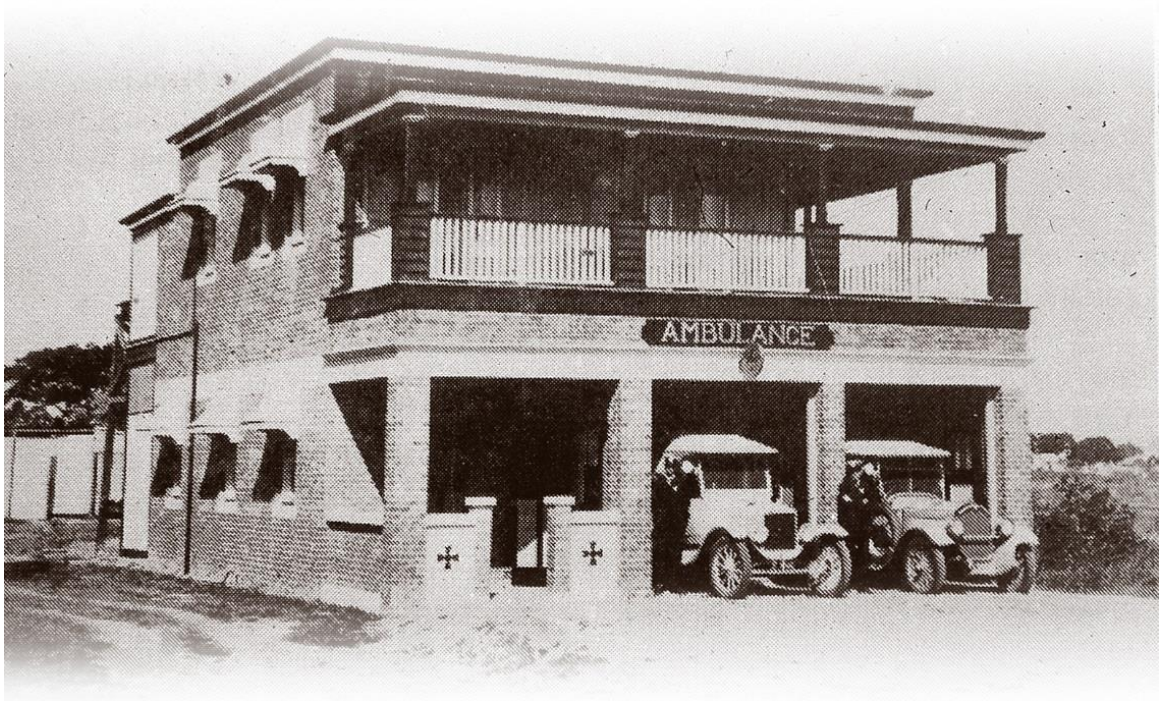
There were no flashing lights and sirens in those days. The purchase of two alarm bells for use on cars was authorised.

At the 1926 Annual General Meeting the Chairperson expressed disappointment that the new building had not been erected. Soon afterwards, however, a local contractor was requested to cost out the building as planned and the Works Department requested to approve the erection by contract.
At last, in late 1926, the tender of Jennings Bros and Gillespie was accepted and recommended at a price of £2,263 ($4,526) with construction time to be four months.

The Committee at its monthly meeting in February 1927 was to have the sad task of moving a motion of sympathy to mark the death of Edgar Von Alpen, who was drowned in the great 1927 flood while carrying out his ambulance duties. A tablet honouring his memory stands erected today in the new Centre on Victoria Mill Road and a headstone stands over his grave in the old cemetery.
Away in Chillagoe was a man soon to vacate the position of Superintendent of the local QATB Centre to begin a long and distinguished career as Superintendent of the Ingham Centre. He was Mr Bert Yeldham, who was appointed to Ingham in March 1927.

Although ambulance officers had clean personal habits in those days, obviously, they liked a bit of luxury too, because the Committee agreed to install an enamel bath in the building instead of one of 'plain iron'.

It was obviously with great satisfaction that in the annual report of 1927 the Chairperson was able to report progress with the Centre building in Townsville Road although this was tempered with the realisation that the new Centre would not open free of debt. Meanwhile the Trustees of the local School of Arts were asked for the use of the building while the new Centre was being completed.
In September 1927, Mr G.T.H. Gough, then residing in Brisbane was appointed as the Committee's first representative on the QATB State Executive.



Townsville Rd Centre erected in 1927

Like other Committees of the day, the Ingham Committee had firm views about the serious matter of matrimony and its possible effects upon working arrangements. In April 1928, it was resolved that Officer Anderson be advised 'that the Committee did not object to him being married, on the condition that it did not interfere with his work'.

In 1928 the Annual General meeting was advised that a new Bean-Six motor vehicle, 'to carry three patients lying down', had been purchased and with the need to maintain vehicles becoming important, moves were undertaken to put down a concrete floor and walls as a vehicle servicing area. Again, Mr Jennings was the successful tenderer with a price of £46,15s ($93.50). Fencing, awning and glassing-in of the Centre verandah were also approved.

In 1934, a doubling of the number of patients attended and mileage travelled led to a unanimous decision by the Committee to appoint an additional ambulance officer. Officer Bill Whittington (in later years to become Superintendent at Ingham) was the final choice.

The Committee decided in 1934 that the Ingham Centre's share of the Walter and Eliza Hall grant should be donated to the less affluent Ravenshoe Centre, a decision reflecting the strong sense of 'family' which has traditionally pervaded the ambulance service.

In 1935 the Committee declined an offer from the Worker's Club to hold a dance in aid of ambulance funds, as it was felt that since workers already contributed handsomely such a function would just amount to 'double-banking'.

CSR's Macknade Mill's annual donation in 1936 was £5,5s ($11), a far cry from the amply generous donation of $20,000 donated to the New Centre Building Appeal by the company in 1986.
Sadness again pervaded a Committee meeting with mention at the November 1939 meeting of the loss of Ambulance Officer Viv Anderson, who was tragically killed on Trebonne Road while in the performance of duty. It was resolved that a tablet to his memory would be placed in the Brigade building and this same tablet now rests in the present building.

The vacancy which Mr Anderson's death left was filled by Senior Ambulance Officer Norman Parker of the Atherton Centre who was employed as Ambulance Officer mechanic.

In January 1941 Officer Parker was appointed Superintendent of the Mareeba Centre.

Moves to establish a Sub-Centre in the Lower Herbert area were energetically commenced again early in 1941 when E.R. Jessup and V.J. Owens waited on the Committee and urged consideration be given to the establishment of a Sub-Centre at Halifax. The Committee promised to give the matter careful consideration.

In 1956 the Ingham Apex Club and the Herbert River Junior Farmers offered assistance with the installation of a two-way radio set in one car and a sub-committee was formed to investigate. Full implementation of two-way radio facilities was achieved in mid-1957 when a decision was made to purchase three mobile units. An aerial tower was subsequently erected on the Library building roof.
In August 1965, a life-time of devoted service to the Ingham Centre came to an end with the resignation of Mr Bert Yeldham. He remained on the staff as an Honorary Ambulance Officer until May 1967, when he was presented with his 50 years' Service Award. When he started in the service in Brisbane in 1917 his weekly rate of pay was £2,2s 6d. The dedicated nature of his work as

Superintendent of the Ingham Centre was recognised in the New Year Honours List of 1967 when he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). Regrettably he died in 1967; a plaque in the present Centre notes for posterity the record of this man's remarkable contribution to the QATB.

Mr Yeldham was succeeded by his Deputy Superintendent Mr Bill Whittington.

Superintendent Whittington retired in November 1976, having completed 48 years' service with the Brigade. He was then appointed to the Ingham Centre's honorary staff. He was presented with his 50 years' Service Award in 1978.

Following the retirement of Superintendent Whittington, Superintendent Allen Brown of the Home Hill Centre was appointed to fill the vacant position.

In February 1981, another staff death was recorded when Honorary Ambulance Officer E.C. Newman was killed in a tragic accident while in the course of duty at a roadside incident.

By the close of 1977 the Committee had recognised a pressing need for new premises. The site of the existing Centre was far too noisy, was flood-prone, posed a continuous traffic safety problem for vehicles coming and going, and could no longer meet the administrative demands of an expanding, modern and cost effective ambulance service.

The 1977/78 budget was therefore to include provision for a Building Fund with which to eventually finance the erection of a new Centre building and Superintendent's residence in a flood-free area. This decision was confirmed later in the year when the Committee accepted in principle the desirability of erecting a new Centre and residence. However, the need to erect in a flood-free zone was to prove a major problem to overcome. Three standard-size allotments of land would be needed for the Centre building, with a fourth and adjoining allotment for the residence.

The Committee's task was further compounded in 1978 when the Chairperson advised that the Planters Club of Halifax was prepared to donate an allotment of land in the main street of Halifax, and a car, if the QATB Committee would erect necessary ambulance premises.

The residents of the Lower Herbert had thereby strongly re-stated their historical claim for a permanent ambulance service in Halifax.

Thus, the Ingham Committee now found itself with the daunting task of having to plan for, and finance, not only a new Centre at Ingham but also a new Sub-Centre at Halifax.

In late 1977 the QATB State Council advised that it favoured a portion of land vested in the Ingham Hospital Board being utilised as a site for the proposed new Centre and recommended that representation be made to the Minister for Health for its allocation to the Brigade. However, a subsequent meeting in 1979 with the Hospital Board proved fruitless, the Board advising that it required all of its available land for planned future expansion.

Meanwhile the offer of land at Halifax had been accepted and the land subsequently vested in the State Council.

Mr Lex Fraser offered to sell the Committee four allotments of land in the Victoria Mill Road and the offer was accepted. At the same time negotiations commenced for the disposal of existing Centre land and buildings in Townsville Road.
Subsequent developmental problems with the
Fraser's Estate land were satisfactorily resolved and by late 1980 it had been decided to proceed with the purchase and to invite the architects to a meeting to discuss proposals for both the Ingham and Halifax buildings.
In January 1983, the Committee recommended acceptance of a tender from E. Gatti Constructions for the Halifax buildings for $178,750. Senior Ambulance Officer, Ian Moore was appointed Officer-in-Charge of the Sub-Centre in October 1983.

The official opening of the Halifax Sub-Centre was performed by Mr J.S. Stodart, President of the QATB State Council. A plaque was presented at the ceremony which recognised the wonderful work of the Lower Herbert Fundraising Committee.

In late 1985 the Committee's architects, Martin Dillon and Associates, were instructed to call tenders for the construction of new Centre buildings at Ingham and in due course the tender of T.A. Cockburn for $488,971 was recommended for Departmental approval. In spite of the hope that the buildings would open free of debt, it became clear at the time that the building appeal was below target and approval was accordingly sought 'to borrow up to $130,000 to assist financing'. A contract was signed in January 1986.

The new premises were officially opened by Mr Gerald Moore, Chairperson of the Queensland Ambulance Services Board on l8 October 1986.

In 1989 Superintendent Allen Brown transferred to the Caboolture Centre and Mr Richie Oliveri Superintendent of the Home Hill Centre was appointed in his stead.

Superintendent B Yeldham, and Chairperson E. Irvin

Chairpersons

Since the inception of the QATB service in Ingham the following people have filled the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

1925 – 1926	F. Fraser
1926 – 1938	A.J. West
1938 – 1940	N.R. Dowling
1940 – 1956	W.A. MacDonald
1956 – 1964	E.R. Garbutt
1964 – 1965	K.L. Cragg
1965 – 1971	E. Hay
1971 – 1985	E.J. Irvin
Present occupant Chairperson	John Gardner MBE