

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance

Mackay

The inauguration of the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade in Mackay was due in a large measure to Dr W. Hoare, a local medical practitioner. On 4 February 1903, he gave a lecture in first aid at the Fire Station. At the conclusion, the 50-people present were requested to meet for the purpose of discussing the establishment of a QATB service. Mr W. Lamb was appointed Chairperson and Mr G. Chidgely temporary Secretary. A provisional committee consisting of H.L. Black, W.W. Holyoake, J.E. Joseph, W. Lamb and A.J. McLean was appointed to inquire into the matter.

In March of that year Mr R. Nye Stevens, Superintendent of the Brisbane Centre and General Secretary addressed a large and enthusiastic audience in the School of Arts. The Mayor (Ald C.P. Ready) presided and with him on the stage were Dr W. Hoare, C.W. Houston, H.B. Black, A.J. McLean, W.W. Holyoake, W. Lamb, F.C. Macnish, W. Jones, W.N. Deffer, J.E. Joseph and W.G. Hodges. Following Mr Steven's address a motion was carried recommending the establishment of a branch of the QATB at Mackay and requesting the provisional committee, already appointed, to take the steps necessary. The names of the Mayor and Mr Macnish were added to the committee. Mr Black later was appointed Chairperson.

The Ambulance commenced activities at the Fire Station in April 1903, and Ambulance Officer W.H. Morse of the Brisbane Centre was appointed Superintendent. Superintendent Morse arrived in Mackay on the 'SS Bombala' on 3 April 1903, and commenced duty at a salary of £2,10s per week.

First Patients

The first patient was treated on 22 April. He was Mr G. Wheeler of Victoria Street, who suffered an incised wound to his left hand when he cut it on a sheet of iron. The first patient transported was Mrs Bradshaw, a resident of Mirani who travelled by train to the old Railway Station, which was situated at the eastern end of Alfred Street. The patient was conveyed by litter from the railway station to Froggart's Hotel. The litter was pushed by Superintendent Morse and Honorary Member Steedman, and being such a novelty was followed by curious spectators which grew to a crowd of about 150 by the time it reached its destination. It is not clear why the patient was taken to the hotel and not to the doctor's surgery, but in those days the doctor was often absent on horseback visiting patients, and quite a good number were nursed in private homes as the only hospital at the time was the District Hospital. During the first year of operation ten men volunteered as Honorary Members of the Brigade. Their main purpose seems to have been in assisting to push the litters. They were C. Steedman, J. Pethebridge, R. Williams, T. Draper, T. Stoneham, E. Jenkins, G. Kitson, L. Hurley, F. Turner and W. Madill.

In this year 436 foot miles were travelled and the total expenditure was £242 18s 11d.

The Horse and Buggy Era

In 1904 a sulky and a horse were purchased because long-distance calls were becoming more frequent and it was the practice to proceed to the call with two men with the littler hooked to the back of the sulky. The patient was loaded onto the litter and the officers would take turns in driving the horse and sulky home and in pushing the litter.

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The horses became famous for their intelligence and it was common to see them trot in and stand under the harness when the alarm bell rang. The harness was hung under the ceiling and lowered onto the horse's back.

In 1907 the Superintendent asked the Committee to purchase a field wagon because trips over the range were prevalent; horses were tiring and changes were hard to arrange. Most of the horses available only ran in pairs. The field wagon should do away with the necessity of pulling a litter and pushing it back as a stretcher could be loaded on to the wagon. The Committee regarded this suggestion as an unwanted luxury.

In the latter part of 1908 the Committee decided to purchase a field wagon after Mr Shannon from 'over the range' had offered to donate a horse and Mr Distledorf had offered to effect the necessary additions to the stables free of charge if the Committee supplied the materials. The horse donated by Mr Shannon ultimately proved to be unsuitable for Ambulance work.

Motorised Transport

In 1913 the Centre's first motor car was purchased. It was a four-cylinder Cadillac and Ambulance Officer E. Fuller of Brisbane was appointed to drive the vehicle and teach the Mackay officers to drive. The first patient transported was from Eimeo and there was great jubilation when the round trip was completed in one and a half hours compared with four hours with horses.

Brigade Building

1909 was a big year in the history of the Mackay Centre. In that year, the Brigade moved from their temporary quarters at the Fire Station to their newly-constructed premises at the corner of Sydney and Alfred Streets, the site of the present Ambulance premises.

The land was purchased for £200 and the contractor Mr C. Porter erected the building for £1,580. The building was officially opened by the Mayor (Ald E.J. Marryat) and Councillor W.H. Kirkup (Chairperson of the Pioneer Shire Council) on 1 September 1909 assisted by their respective Ladies. Mrs Marryat opened the doors of the building and Mrs Kirkup unfurled the flag that had been presented by a number of ladies interested in Ambulance work.



Centre building opened 1909

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For the purpose of raising funds for the construction of this building, the Committee decided to conduct an art union. This was done and it spoke volumes for the popularity of the Brigade that the number of one-shilling tickets sold exceeded the number of men, women and children in the district. The net result was £742. The prizes valued at £250 were all voluntarily contributed.

New Premises

On 17 August 1953, Mr J. Condie (Chairperson of the Committee) presented a scheme for the erection of a brick and concrete structure to replace the existing building. The Committee approved, tenders were invited and the tender of D.B. & J.A. MacDonald was accepted. This firm was given possession of the site on 2 June 1958.

On 31 October 1959, the structure that stands today at the corner of Sydney and Alfred Streets was officially opened by the Hon E. Evans MLA, Member for Mirani.

Through the magnificent fundraising efforts of the QATB Mackay Staff Benefit Committee the building was opened free of debt.

Staff

Superintendent Morse was appointed to the Brisbane Centre as Superintendent/Secretary in 1918 and was succeeded by his Deputy Superintendent Mr A.C. Williams.

Other officers who have served in the positions of Superintendent and Secretary at the Mackay Centre are:

| | |
|--------------------|-----------------|
| 1924 – 1944 | F. Culverhouse |
| 1944 – 1946 | D.L.S. Williams |
| 1946 – 1953 | T. Beech |
| 1953 – 1970 | D.L.S. Williams |
| 1970 – 1986 | L Beutel |

Present occupant Superintendent Ray Trenaman

Chairpersons

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

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 1903 – 1911 | H.B. Black |
| 1911 – 1914 | C.P. Ready |
| 1914 – 1922 | W.G. Hodges |
| 1922 – 1923 | W.W. Holyoake |
| 1923 – 1926 | F. Bourne |
| 1926 – 1935 | C.F. Bagley |
| 1935 – 1936 | Dr E. Chenoweth |
| 1936 – 1938 | C.R. Croker |
| 1938 – 1939 | W.A. Amiet |
| 1938 – 1939 | H.J. Manning |
| 1953 – 1956 | J. Condie |
| 1956 – 1973 | E.S. Nicholson |
| Present occupant Chairperson | K.H. Franklin |



First Superintendent W.H. Morse

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Mackay Honorary and Sub-Centres

Honorary Centres were springing up all over the district in 1908, being established at Marian, Mirani, Farleigh, Racecourse, Pleystowe, Hampden (now Kuttabul) and Mount Flora.

In 1911 an Honorary Centre attached to Mackay was established at Proserpine. In 1913 this Centre was closed due mainly to its distance from Mackay, and the inconvenience of working it.

However, Proserpine re-opened in 1925 and Mr D.L.S. Williams became the first Officer-in-Charge at this place. Proserpine became self-governing, and was handed over by the Mackay Committee in 1927 with Officer R. Bartlett becoming the first Superintendent.

St Lawrence became an Honorary Centre of Mackay in 1915. It reverted to the control of Rockhampton Centre about the time the railway line was completed between Rockhampton and Mackay about 1921.

St Lawrence again came under the control of the Mackay Centre in April 1966.

Calen became a Sub-Centre of Mackay on the 1 July 1924, due to the rapid development of cane farms in this area. The first Officer-in-Charge at this Centre was Tom Leach.

In 1910 Sarina became a Sub-Centre, established at Plane Creek on the site of the Sugar Mill. In later years, it was moved to its present site.

Finch Hatton also became a Sub-Centre in 1913 due mainly to the development of the sugar industry and the erection of Cattle Creek Mill.

In March 1923, a Sub-Centre was established at Collinsville. In June of that year, Collinsville became a self-governing Centre and Deputy Superintendent F. Culverhouse of Mackay was appointed Superintendent.

Carmila was growing rapidly and on 5 May 1951 a Sub-Centre was opened with Officer-in-Charge J.H. Flavell becoming the first officer.

Seaforth was becoming a popular seaside resort, with more and more people enjoying the beaches, and it was therefore necessary to open an Honorary Centre in this area. This Centre was, however, only manned during the holiday periods, as it still is today. The present Centre was opened on 16 May 1958 by Mr Lloyd Roberts MLA for Whitsunday.

In 1985, the Mackay Committee decided to open an Honorary Centre in Coppabella, a railway town with the main road through to the west passing beside the town.

Cattle and grain are the backbone of Nebo where an Honorary Centre is established with one car and one Honorary Officer who willingly gives his time to the Ambulance for the people of the town and district. The original Centre at Nebo was at the local general store, later transferring to a shed that was burnt to the ground.

HISTORY OF THE *Queensland Ambulance*

Glenden was a new town being established when the coal mine at Newlands, some 20 kilometres away, was under construction. The first permanent officer at Glenden was Mr H. Wilson who transferred from Boyne Island Sub-Centre of Gladstone Centre. This Sub-Centre was opened on 6 June 1983. North Mackay is a very rapidly expanding residential and industrial area. The original Sub-Centre was located in Bundersen Street and opened in 1974. A new Sub-Centre was erected in Phillip Street in 1984.