

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance Atherton

Q ATB services commenced in Atherton in 1906 when the Cairns Centre Committee established an Honorary Centre with Honorary Bearer E. (Ted) Greening in charge. He was assisted by Honorary Bearer Lawrence who was the local Police Sergeant.

On 17 August 1909, the Cairns Committee resolved to call tenders for Brigade premises in Atherton and to convert the Honorary Centre into a Sub-Centre with a paid Officer-in-Charge. On 13 September 1909, the tender of Mr J. Edwards for £295 was accepted and Honorary Bearer Allan Knudson of Cairns was appointed the first Deputy Superintendent in charge at Atherton with a weekly wage of £3.

The new premises were built on the site where the existing Brigade buildings now stand.

At a meeting of the Cairns Committee held on 15 March 1911 T. Moody (Chairperson) and G.H. Clarke (Member) of the Atherton Sub-Centre Committee attended to discuss the conversion of the Atherton Sub-Centre into a Branch Centre.

On 23 May 1912 Atherton was gazetted as a Branch Centre and Deputy Superintendent Knudson was appointed Superintendent and Secretary.

Members of the Provisional Committee that took over the control of the new independent centre were Jos. Johnson (Chairperson), H. McKnight (Honorary Treasurer), G.H. Clarke, W.N. Gillies, J. Hanrahan, F. Norbury, and Jas. Thomas.



First building, Superintendent A Knudsen with litter

During the year, an awning was erected to protect the main building from the weather. An outbuilding measuring 24 feet by 13 feet and containing two rooms was also erected. One room was used as an office and the other as officers' sleeping quarters.

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It was found necessary to engage an assistant and Bearer W.J. Park was appointed.

In 1912 the Brigade's plant consisted of two horses, one field wagon with pole, shafts, double set of harness, with all accessories; one rubber-tyred Ashford litter and two rigid stretchers. At Russell Pocket Honorary Centre there was one collapsible stretcher and all the necessary first aid material, and at the Kureen Honorary Centre there was first aid material and medicaments.

During 1913 the benefits of the Brigade were extended to Millaa Millaa through Honorary member Len Compton. Honorary Bearer R. Leighton of Atherton took up residence in Millaa Millaa and like Mr Compton was also supplied with a kit.

Mr Knudson relinquished his position in February 1915 to take up farming in the Millaa Millaa district. Mr Knudson enrolled as an honorary officer and was placed in charge of the Millaa Millaa Honorary Centre.



Superintendent FH Browning

Superintendent Fred Browning who succeeded Mr Knudson obtained his ambulance qualifications in England while undergoing experience with the St John Ambulance Brigade and the British Red Cross Society. He first joined the QATB in October 1911 as an honorary bearer on the Cairns staff. Shortly afterwards he was placed in charge of the Honorary Centre at Babinda and then became Deputy Superintendent in charge of the Kidston Sub-Centre.

Known as 'the one and only Browning' he was a wonderful entertainer and in his later years spent many hours during the Second World War entertaining troops stationed on the Tableland.

In 1919 an Honorary Centre was established at Ravenshoe with Honorary Bearer H.C. Neilson in charge. He was assisted by Honorary Bearers A.G. Rayment and E.P. Grigg.

On 30 December 1919, a special meeting of the Atherton Committee was convened because of the forthcoming marriage of a permanent officer.

The Chairperson pointed out to members the difficulties that arose when a staff member married. He said,

'It had been practically an unwritten law that so far the officers had to be single so that the requirements of the Brigade's efficiency be fully maintained in as much that the rules applying to officers stated that they were to be on call at the centre at any time of the day or night as may be required. The situation was an awkward one as no one wanted to stop a man from being married.'

The officer was called into the meeting and asked to give an assurance he would carry out his duties as in the past and would sleep at the centre.

The necessary assurance was given by the officer. However, he resigned within two weeks because of his promotion to the rank of Superintendent at another Centre.

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At its meeting on 23 May 1922 the Committee appointed Mr Richard Rowland Dawson of Mareeba to the honorary staff and supplied him with a kit.

In September 1922, the status of the Honorary Centre at Millaa Millaa was raised to that of a Sub-Centre with a permanent Officer-in-Charge, and in 1925 Millaa Millaa was gazetted as an independent Centre.

Following representations from the Ravenshoe district, the Committee decided in January 1922 to send officer T.J. Edwards to Ravenshoe as a temporary Officer-in-Charge. Later in the year a permanent Sub-Centre was established and Bearer M.T. Chambers was appointed to take charge.

Early in 1931 the Atherton Committee considered closing the Ravenshoe Sub-Centre because of financial difficulties. However, later in the year a self-governing Centre was established and Bearer Jack Dempsey of Atherton was appointed Superintendent.

On Monday 21 June 1954, the Committee opened a Sub-Centre at the Tinaroo Dam site. This would not have been possible without the generosity of the Department of Irrigation, which supplied a new ambulance vehicle and met the initial costs incurred in the setting up of the Sub-Centre. In addition, the Department guaranteed to meet the difference between the amount of contributions obtained locally and the overall cost of running the Sub-Centre. Bearer Malcolm Scott of Atherton was appointed Officer-in-Charge. The Sub-Centre was closed in April 1959.

During the financial year 1955-56 the Committee accepted an allotment of land in Malanda as an Ambulance Reserve in lieu of Reserve No 725 acquired in 1920 as it was considered that the new allotment was much more suitable for ambulance requirements.

For a number of years, the Committee had been planning to replace the centre building which had received several additions and alterations since its erection. On 19 November 1955, at a well-attended ceremony, the foundation stone for the new building was laid by Mr Fred Browning who had retired from the position of Superintendent-Secretary in 1949. On 24 March 1956 Dr A. Ottone (a former Committee member) officially opened the new building on behalf of the Pioneers of Atherton and District.

In October 1987, a Sub-Centre was established at Malanda. The Sub-Centre building and residence for the Officer-in-Charge were constructed at a tender price of \$159,200. The official opening was performed by Mr Don Waugh, Chairperson of the Eacham Shire Council on 1 November 1987.

Mr Ron Fleming succeeded Superintendent Browning and since his retirement in 1976 the following officers have occupied the positions of Superintendent and Secretary:

1976 – 1979 P.H. Moore

1979 – 1980 F.G. Gibson

1980 – 1982 M.D. Williams

Present occupant Superintendent Merv Lucas

Chairpersons

Since the establishment of a self-governing centre at Atherton, the following people have filled the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

1912 – 1928 Jos. Johnson

1928 – 1934 T.S. Kelly

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1934 – 1942	E.J. Mazlin
1942 – 1944	J. Mason
1944 – 1951	N.T. Fitchett
1951 – 1952	Jas. Forrest
1952 – 1953	E.L. Spinks
1953 – 1958	Lou Radlof
1958 – 1959	K.J. Graham
1959 – 1961	D.P. Regan
1961 – 1982	H.C. Kinzbrunner
1982 – 1985	R.P. Fleming
Present occupant	Mr E.A. Reis



Staff at Abberton 1919 (left to right) SA Officer, T Greening, A Knudsen, D Leighton, E Morgan (front row), C Griffin, J Loth, W McConnaghie, D Gillies