

# HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance Bundaberg

At a meeting held in the Bundaberg Council Chambers on Friday 6 June 1907 under the presidency of the Mayor, Ald A.E. Avenell it was decided to ascertain the views of the principal residents regarding the advisability of requesting the QATB State Executive Committee to open a Branch Centre in Bundaberg. Mr F.W. Faithful was elected Honorary Secretary and was instructed to communicate with residents on the matter. He subsequently sent out 170 circular letters to planters, merchants and residents in and about the town.

Having received a large number of favourable replies, a further public meeting was held on 19 July. Mr W.H. Bell, Chairperson of the Brisbane Centre Committee and Mr Gus King, General Secretary and Brisbane Superintendent were present.

The Mayor asked Mr Bell to speak on the objectives of the Brigade and Superintendent King to explain the workings of a branch and the operational costs. It was unanimously decided that a branch of the QATB should be opened in Bundaberg.

A provisional Committee was appointed comprising the following: Ald A.E. Avenell, H.S. Skyring, E.R. Cole, J. Thomas, F.W. Faithfull, F.W. Avenell, D. Fleming, R. Curtis, G.M. Krieger, W. Dunn, E.T. Amos, M. Duffy, J. Slattery, E. Brady, G.A. Buss, A. Willmot and A. Gibson.

At a meeting of the Provisional Committee held on 8 August Mr H.S. Skyring was appointed Chairperson. Members were advised by letter from the General Secretary that an Officer-in-Charge would be sent up from Brisbane at the end of the month. The Honorary Secretary reported that he had obtained the option on the premises next door to W. Rowe Baker in Bourbong Street together with a shed alongside. He was instructed to secure the house and shed. The Chairperson offered to make alterations to the shed to suit the Brigade if the Superintendent (to be appointed) thought them suitable.

Ambulance Officer H. Miller of the Brisbane Centre was selected as the first Superintendent of the newly established Branch Centre. He arrived in Bundaberg on 29 August 1907 and brought with him a complete rubber-tyred litter, one collapsible stretcher and a stock of first aid material.

Superintendent Miller attended his first meeting with the Committee on 3 September 1907. The Chairperson was empowered to make the necessary arrangements to lease premises in Bourbong Street opposite the Paramount Theatre. At this meeting the following people were appointed as Honorary Bearers on three months' probation: A.W. Thygesen, E. George, J.E. Lees, W.A. Alison and C.E. Warrell.



*First Superintendent H Miller*

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At this time, in response to a request from the QATB Committee, the Burnett Bridge Board decided to permit ambulance officers and litters to pass over the traffic bridge free of the toll charge.

From 29 August to 31 December 1907 officers attended to 120 patients and travelled 169 miles. The honorary staff performed 346 hours of duty. The first patient treated in the casualty room was Thos Pritchard who had sustained a puncture wound in the palm of his left hand while opening an oyster. The first 'call out' was in response to a request from a police officer. However, upon arrival at the Railway Station, it was found that the Brigade's services were not required. The first donation received was from H.A. Skyring and Sons and the first contributor was Mr H.S. Skyring (Chairperson).



*Centre Building 1908*

Honorary Officer A.W. Thygesen was appointed as a permanent ambulance officer in March 1908. In later years, he was to become the first Superintendent of the Stanthorpe and Charleville Centres.

A galvanised iron shed was built at the side of the Superintendent's residence to house the litter and later the horse and vehicles.

The Committee had arranged the manufacture of a specially-built sulky to trail the litter. The late H.R. Lassig donated a pony to draw the sulky. This turnout - horse, litter and officer - allowed speedy travel to the scene of accidents or the sick and needy. The patient would be placed on the litter and, on the return trip, the officer was compelled to push the litter and travel on foot. The pony was trained to follow the officer who was pushing the litter.

The next step of progress was in 1912 when a four-wheel ambulance field wagon pulled by two horses and complete with two stretchers was acquired. The splendid service of the QATB by this time had been worthily recognised by the public of Bundaberg and district with their most generous financial support to the extent that the Committee in 1912 decided to build a new Centre on land that had been acquired in Maryborough Street.

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Mr F.H. Faircloth, Architect, was engaged to prepare plans and specifications upon which tenders were invited and N. Steffenson, Building Contractor tendered the sum of £3227, which was accepted. The foundation stone was laid by the Honorable A. Gibson MLA on 17 March 1913 and the building was opened free of debt by the Honorable John White MLA and Mr G.P. Barber MLA on 22 January 1914.

In order to open the new quarters free of debt, the Home Secretary, Hon J.G Appel had acceded to the Committee's request to pay in advance the government endowment due up to July 1915.

In respect of finances, it is interesting to note the following extract from the report of the General Secretary of the Brigade on his visit to Bundaberg in 1913:

*"The district was looking very dry at the time of my visit, and the cane crop was indifferent. From what I could gather, in the course of casual conversation with the townspeople, the future of cane growing did not appear hopeful, but they all spoke of the likelihood of dairying taking its place if the worst came to the worst. The Brigade will to present appearance, open its new building with a debt of some £1500, but notwithstanding this, I consider the prospects of this Centre in every way hopeful.*

*Its workings are well spoken of in the town, and the number of cases treated on the increase."*

At the close of 1914 the Brigade plant comprised five horses, one wagon with stretchers and appliances and one set of double harness; one sulky with detachable gear and two sets of single harness; complete litters, all of which were rubber-tyred; one bicycle; and five collapsible stretchers, one at the Centre and one at each of the following places: Gin Gin Central Mill, Gin Gin Railway Station, Bingera Mill and Rosedale Station.

In order to provide a quicker and more effective means of transport and to reduce the excessive cost of stable maintenance the Committee at its August 1915 meeting decided to install a Buick Motor Ambulance at a cost of £410.

At its meeting on 3 November 1919, the Committee decided to establish a Life Saving Branch. By 31 December 16 members had been enrolled, forming two teams for duty on alternate Sundays, and one team for Thursday afternoons. Members were supplied with badges. A.L. Reid and F.C. Amos were appointed Team Captains and the Committee secured the services of Mr E. Christensen who was a qualified instructor in life saving. At the March 1920 meeting the Committee resolved to purchase a lifesaving reel from the Manly Surf Club for the sum of £2.

In 1949 after 42 years' service with the Bundaberg Centre Superintendent Miller resigned to live in retirement at Bargara. His successor was Superintendent John Grimstead of the Nambour Centre who served the Committee nobly and well until his retirement in 1964. Superintendent Jack Patrick of the Murgon Centre was then appointed to the vacant position.

The services of the Brigade were in ever-increasing demand in Bundaberg and the local people were in full support of the service. The extra demands meant that more equipment was needed and more equipment meant that more space was needed to house it. After several years of study, planning and deliberations, the Committee approached Cook and Kerrison and Partners, Architects, to prepare plans for the erection of a new building after the demolition of the building it occupied.

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*Opening of Centre Building 1913*

Tenders were invited resulting in the acceptance of the tender of S.C. Lohse & Co for the sum of \$147,000.

The foundation stone was duly laid on 29 March 1969 by the Mayor Ald C.J. Nielson and in order to maintain the historical interest, the original foundation stone was re-laid on this same day by Mr Garnet L. Buss, who served on the Centre Committee in the 1920-1930 period.

Sir Douglas Fraser ISO, President of the QATB State Council performed the official opening on 4 April 1969 before a crowd of about 250 people. In outlining the history of the QATB in Bundaberg the Committee Chairperson (Ald D.G. Rattray) said that the original building catered for a population of

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10,000 when it was constructed in 1913 and that in 1969 the Centre had to meet the needs of a district population of 48,000.

In 1978 the Committee sought the approval of the QATB State Council in a proposal to establish a Sub-Centre at Bargara for the servicing of Bargara, Elliott Heads, and Burnett Heads and areas adjacent to those seaside towns.

Subsequently land was acquired in Tanner Street, Bargara and the Committee engaged Mr D.E. Tame, Architect, to prepare plans and specifications for a Sub-Centre building and residence for the Officer-in-Charge.

Following Departmental approval of plans, tenders were invited and the tender of John Murchie Constructions for \$174,994 was accepted.

Councillor G.C.C. Maughan MBE, Chairperson of the Woongarra Shire Council, laid the foundation stone on 22 December 1979 and the official opening was performed by Sir Douglas Fraser ISO on 14 June 1980. The total cost of the project was \$204,000.

Superintendent Patrick passed away in 1981. Deputy Superintendent Lino Bagarozza then took over the reins and was subsequently appointed as the Centre's fourth Superintendent.

The Bundaberg Committee was responsible for the establishment of the Wide Bay Burnett Aerial Ambulance Service. The aircraft selected was a Cessna 402 and after special ambulance configuration modification it was commissioned for service on 2 May 1983.

Tragedy struck the Bundaberg-based service on the morning of 21 June 1987, when, on a medical emergency flight, the aircraft crashed soon after take-off killing Ambulance Officer Kenneth James McPherson, the pilot, patient and nurse.

There are presently two ambulance aircraft stationed in Bundaberg.

In August 1987, the Bundaberg Committee hosted a State Conference of QATB Committees for the second time. The Committee had previously played host in 1962.

Since the establishment of the Centre the following people have served in the position of Chairperson of the Committee:

**1907 – 1913** H.S. Skyring  
**1913 – 1921 and May –**  
**August 1932** F.W. Faithfull  
**1921 – 1922 and 1929** —  
**May 1932** M. Dunn  
**1922 – 1923** L.H. Maynard  
**1923 – 1924** R. Goodwin  
**1924 – 1925** E.A. Vollbon  
**1925 – 1926 and August**  
**1932 – 1952** J. Lovejoy  
**1926 – 1927** D.T. Skyring  
**1927 – 1928** O.J. Gruter

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1928 – 1929 H.R. Machan  
1952 – 1965 R.T. Smith  
1965 – 1981 D.G. Rattray, MBE  
1981 – 1982 E.H. Hansen  
from 1982 E.H. Grohn