

# *HISTORY OF THE* *Queensland Ambulance*

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## *Gladstone*

Compiled with the assistance of M.B. Ryalls (former Committee Member).

Prior to September 1917, records tell us that a voluntary organisation, with a Mr George Ambrose in charge, carried out a great deal of ambulance work. A prominent businessman, Mr A.S. Glegg acted as Chairperson of a small committee, which consisted of Mr Jack Dale, Mr J.W. Coase and Mr Ambrose. Mr Dale and Mr Ambrose worked for Mr Coase, who was a Coach Builder and Blacksmith, and owner of the land on which the first Ambulance Centre was built. This served as a Centre for many years.

As Gladstone only operated as an Honorary Centre of the Rockhampton Brigade, all monies raised by the Gladstone Committee had to be forwarded to Rockhampton, as the voluntary committee had no authority to spend money without the permission of the Rockhampton Centre.

Early in the year 1917, an idea was conceived that a Fete, procession and sports program should be held at the Show Grounds. Any money raised was to be used to purchase a motor ambulance and a building for a Centre. Miss Mabel Glegg acted as Honorary Secretary, the committee acting under the approved name of Allies Fair Procession and Sports Committee.

A drawcard for the sports program was the presence of Mrs Horder who was a champion cyclist of Australia at that time, and who took part in the cycling events of the day.

Admission to the grounds was one shilling for adults, with children paying half price. The gate takings totalled £47,10s, while the total receipts from various stalls amounted to £145,8s,10d.



*Centre building 1927*

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The success of the day surpassed the hopes of the organisers and the morale of the Committee was sufficiently heightened to warrant them pursuing their aim, namely, to raise status of Gladstone Ambulance so that it could function as an independent unit. The public support given to that Easter Monday 1917 event indicated to the Committee that the time was right for the next step.

The Committee approached the Mayor of Gladstone, Ald J.H. Kessell, and asked him to call a public meeting so that they could ascertain the public reaction to their desire for an independent Ambulance Centre.

The Mayor agreed to call a public meeting and this was scheduled for the evening of 6 September 1917 with the Mayor presiding. The venue for the meeting was the ambulance building at the corner of Glenlyon and Yarroon Streets, which had recently been purchased from Brown & Coase, Commission Agents.

The General Secretary of the QATB, Mr Barrett, was present at the meeting, having come from Brisbane vested with the necessary powers and authority to judge whether it was a fit and proper time to have a new Centre constituted. He said he was satisfied that there was sufficient interest shown by the public of Gladstone to have a Centre opened, and it was with great pleasure that he declared open the Gladstone Centre.

Mr Barrett advised the meeting that a provisional Committee was to be appointed that night, and would remain in office until the Annual Meeting, which would be held in January 1918. Mr Barrett also advised that he approved of the list of nominations of gentlemen who would comprise the Committee, the same having been thoughtfully selected and truly representative of various sections of both town and district communities.

The members of that first Committee were: C. Curtis (Calliope State School), W. Hodge (Waterside Workers of Gladstone), W. Neilson (Solicitor Gladstone), E. Stapleton (Young Australian Hotel), G. Alexander (Manager, Australian Bank of Commerce), Dr C.H. Clatworthy (Gladstone Hospital), F.J. Gilmore (Employees of Sawmills), A.S. Clegg (Business Manager), T.S. Bell (Grazier, Calliope), W.C. Hooley (Yarwun/Targinnie) and A.T. Bayne (Benaraby). The Centre's representative on the State's Executive was J.H. Kessell.

The meeting was informed by Mr Barrett that Mr W.G. Daniel had been appointed by the Executive Committee of the QATB Brisbane, to take charge of the new Centre in Gladstone. Superintendent Daniel had a brilliant career in Ambulance work. He possessed the Brigade's Gold Medallion for having completed over 20 years of honourable and efficient service, and was one of the most highly-qualified men in the service.

At the end of the meeting, and to complete the beginning of another QATB Centre in Queensland, a decision was made to form an Ambulance Ladies Committee. The members were J. Fry, G. Ambrose, R. Watts, M. Clegg, A. Kiernan, S. Coase and M. Allison.

Having terminated the public meeting, the Committee met and appointed Mr A.S. Clegg as chairperson and Mr W.H. Neilson as Treasurer. It also confirmed the appointment of Mr W.G. Daniel as Superintendent Secretary at a salary of £4 per week, with a residence provided.

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It was decided that a Hupmobile car, fully-equipped as an Ambulance, be purchased at a cost of £515. It was also decided the Superintendent Daniel should drive the vehicle from Brisbane to Gladstone.

The number of cases attended up until 31 December 1917 totalled 49. These included accident cases, transport cases and minor cases. The distance travelled was 955 miles. The Centre had a credit balance of £97,9s,9d in the bank at the time. There were many expenses to meet in the formation of a Centre - expenses that would not arise in the course of the workings of an established Centre. The sum of £100 was paid to the parent body in Brisbane. The amount still owing to them by the Gladstone Centre was £462. The Auditors for the first period of operations were G.E. Davidson and E. Fordyce.

The first Annual Meeting of the Gladstone QATB was held on 4 February 1918. Those present were the Chairperson, Mr A.S. Clegg, E. Stapleton, G.E. Alexander, W.H. Neilson, W. Hodge, D Jackson, W.V Coase and F. Gilmore, Mrs L Watts, Misses M. Clegg and A. Coase and the Secretary, W.G. Daniel.

The election of a committee of seven resulted in A.S. Clegg, G.E. Alexander, E. Stapleton, F. Gilmore, W. Hodge, W.H. Neilson and W.V Coase being elected. (Mr Alexander resigned in September that year and was replaced by Mr W. Ross.) Mr Clegg was re-elected as chairperson and Mr Neilson was re-appointed Treasurer.

The chairperson, in his report, made mention of the fact that notwithstanding the many calls on the public for patriotic funds during the fifth year of the Great War then raging, the response to all of the Brigade's appeals had been generously met.

The number of cases attended during the year was 371. The number of miles travelled was 3567. Two hundred pounds had been repaid to the parent centre in Brisbane. Eighty-five pounds had been spent on the Gladstone Centre. This included lining of the whole building, painting the outside and erecting a garage. The balance in the ABC bank was £183,16s,4d.

The chairperson noted that the support given by the Honorary staff was excellent.

The annual report for the year ending 31 December 1919 showed that all officers were re-elected, with Mr M.F. Mylne being appointed to the committee at the end of that year. The number of cases attended had continued to increase, as had the number of miles covered.

The committee finances improved greatly, due to the Queensland Railway employees contributing one penny in the pound from their wages. Port Curtis Dairy agreed to pay 3d (threepence) per week from each employee, with the Company subscribing in a pound-for-pound basis and the Australian Meat Employees contributed one shilling per week per member.

The balance of £263 owing to the parent body in Brisbane was repaid. Finances showed a credit balance of £303 at the end of the year.

This was the last year that the financial year ended 31 December, as the Constitution was then changed to end the financial year at 30 June. During the eighteen-month period from December 1919 to June 1921, the cases attended numbered 1048 and the Ambulance travelled 14,359 miles.

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Also in this period, Gladstone Centre opened an Honorary Centre at Ambrose. This area, situated six miles north of Mount Larcom on the Railway line, was suddenly developed and some 80 men were employed there in a sawmill and a lime works - two industries with fairly high accident rates. Land was donated by Mr H. Ambrose and substantial premises were erected on the site. The Honorary Centre at Ambrose continued to operate until 1923, when Rockhampton decided to establish a full-time Sub-Centre at Mount Larcom.

Naturally, boundary disputes broke out between Gladstone and Rockhampton, regarding their respective sub-centres and unofficial war was declared. Gladstone maintained that Rockhampton had infiltrated their territory by the establishment of a Sub-Centre at Mt. Larcom, six miles south of their Sub-Centre at Ambrose. Rockhampton argued that Gladstone was at fault by establishing a centre at Ambrose that was six miles north of their southern boundary of Mt. Larcom. Ambulance services in both Ambrose and Mount Larcom suffered as a result of the bickering, until finally the State Executive intervened to prevent the situation deteriorating further.

The General Secretary of the State Executive of the QATB, Captain E.R.B. Pike, arrived in Gladstone in April, in an attempt to settle the situation. A temporary truce was called and committee men from both centres met in an on-the-spot conference. Pike was present but little was achieved, even after he visited both centres. He also expressed views to the Gladstone papers, regarding Rockhampton's invasion of the area. This did not stop Rockhampton who went ahead and appointed Deputy Superintendent Villiers of Rockhampton as acting Officer-in-Charge of Mount Larcom. It was not until 1926 that the issue was resolved and Ambrose came under Mount Larcom. Ambrose later closed and Mount Larcom Centre today functions in its own right.

The early years of the Gladstone Centre were pressure years for the committee. In 1921, £100 was paid for a building site in Goondoon Street where a new centre was to be built, and at the same time a second vehicle was purchased.

During 1925, Gladstone QATB attended 357 accidents, 274 transports and 354 minor cases - a total of 9976. Its officers travelled a total of 8970 miles at a cost of sixpence halfpenny per mile, including registration and insurance. Several journeys were long, including one that required crossing the Cannundah Range into Cania - a journey of 287 miles. In this year, the oldest car at the centre was sold for £125 and new one purchased for £450.

As the workload increased at the Gladstone Centre in 1926, Mr W. Coase was appointed as a paid bearer. His salary increased the Gladstone Centre expenditure by more than £250 a year.

During the following year 1927, the contract was let for the building of the new Centre in Goondoon Street, next to the railway bridge. Tenderer Mr F. Hill secured the £1,820 contract and was allowed four months to complete the building, which at the time was referred to as an up-to-date two-storey building. Amongst other advantages tending towards greater efficiency in the working of the brigade, was the inclusion of quarters for the Superintendent and staff in the new building.

To finance the new building, the Ambulance received a grant of £750 from the Public Works Department, with the bulk of the money being borrowed from the Commonwealth Bank on mortgage. That the Committee fully realised the need for suitable buildings and amenities to meet the increase in attention to patients, is substantiated by the comparison of the number of cases attended to in 1917 and those of 1926. In 1917, 371 cases were attended, involving travel of 3567 miles, while in 1926, 1237

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cases were attended involving travel of 10 450 miles. As well as all this there was all the work being carried out at the sub-centres.

The pressure of those early years was somewhat alleviated by the fact that there were so many dedicated Superintendents, Bearers, Honorary Bearers, Officials and Committee members, who gave many years' service in their respected positions.

During the time of the dispute between Rockhampton and Gladstone over Mount Larcom, Mr A.S. Clegg was Chairperson from 1917 until 29 January 1920. Mr M. Mylne served from that date until 1924. Mr A.T. Power took over in 1925 and served for an incredible 33 1/2 years until the end of 1959. They were very difficult years, with the country in the grip of Depression during the thirties, and on one occasion, Mr Power was forced to appeal to the bank to guarantee the staff wages.

Mr Power was fortunate to have the assistance of seven very dedicated men while he was in office. These were A.S. Fry (27 years), J.S. Clayton (23 years), W. O'Reilly (18 years), H.M. Ballantine (16 years), W. Ross (12 years) and G.A. Wyatt (12 years). Each one of these men rendered great service to the Gladstone QATB, and, as none of them were young men, this must be considered a great achievement.

When death claimed Mr Power in 1959, Mr John Breslin was appointed Chairperson on 13 November 1959. He remained in this position until his death on 21 April 1974. Altogether he gave 20 years' service to the QATB, 15 of them as Chairperson. His sudden death was a loss not only to the QATB but also to many Gladstone organisations. He was succeeded by Mr Graham Fenton, the present Chairperson.

During their terms of office on the committee, all these men were fortunate to have some fine Superintendents and Bearers.

Firstly, Superintendent Daniel served 20 years from 6 September 1917. Then Mr W. Coase, who had been appointed to the committee in 1918 and acted as Treasurer from 1921 to 1926, resigned to take up the position of bearer in that year. When Superintendent Daniel retired, Mr Coase was appointed Superintendent, a position he held until illness forced him to tender his resignation on 8 May 1953. He completed 33 years of service on 30 June 1953. Mr Peter Hutchion had joined the staff as a Driver Bearer in 1929, and remained for 20 years, acting as Superintendent and Secretary in Mr Coase's absence. Mr Coase was fortunate to also have faithful Honorary Bearers such as Mr D. Jackson and Mr M. O'Brien who both served for 34 years while carrying on in their occupations of Town Council employee in Mr Jackson's case, while Mr O'Brien was a waterside worker. Their time of 68 years between them rates high in the records of service in Queensland.

J. Wood, A. Barker, L.G. Spence, G. Curren, W.E. Hixon and G. Bruce were also Honorary Bearers who gave great service over the years. It was most unfortunate that Mr Hixon lost his life in the war. Mr Coase's resignation saw the appointment of Mr W. Jeffery as Superintendent of the Gladstone Centre on 9 July 1953. Mr Jeffrey had joined the service as an Honorary Bearer in Miriam Vale on 1 July 1927. During his time there from 1927 to 1933, he gained First Aid Certificates, Home Nursing Medallions, Home Hygiene Labels and Pendants among other qualifications. Although he was only an Honorary Bearer, when the position of Superintendent at Winton became available in 1933, he applied for and got the position, which was something of an achievement. Mr Jeffrey served Gladstone from 1953 until his retirement in 1976.

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During Mr Jeffery's term of Superintendent, the position of Deputy Superintendent was established for the first time in Gladstone. Mr Thomas Butler, who had been Superintendent in Miriam Vale, took up the position in October 1966.

1967 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the Ambulance Service in Gladstone. This was distinguished by the opening of the new Ambulance Centre by Ald W.R. Golding MBE FRGS, on 8 April 1967. A Centre that would fill the growing needs of the Ambulance for years ahead had been the goal of the Committee for some time. The funding of \$60,000 had been obtained partially from the Commonwealth Bank, and the remainder from the proceeds of a very lucrative lucky envelope stall - thanks to the boom time experienced in Gladstone that year. This Centre should be adequate for many years to come. Although still in debt, when the sale of the old building was finalised, it was expected that the overdraft with the Bank would be cleared.

The financial statement presented in 1967 showed a credit balance of \$24,143.58, and closed with a credit of \$24,787.51. The debt to the bank was \$19,500. Principal sources of income were street stalls, benefits and the art unions that brought in \$21,717.32. \$31,446.68 was spent on the building and wages cost \$13,092.

Donations much appreciated during the year were two-way radios for vehicles from the Apex Club, and funds from the Lion's Club to outfit the casualty room.

The old Ambulance building was sold to W. Stobo for \$19,000 on 21 June 1967.

At the July meeting in 1968, a letter was received from the Calliope Progress Association requesting the establishment of a Sub-Centre at Calliope. The request was held over until the September meeting, while investigations were made regarding finance and the number of cases likely to be treated. At the Committee meeting in held 13 August 1969, it was decided that a Sub-Centre should be established at Calliope, and that the State Council should be so notified.

On 9 June 1971, the Committee decided that in the next budget, an amount of \$30,000 should be submitted for approval for the establishment of the Calliope Centre. The State Council did not approve, even though the Gladstone Centre was one of the most financial in the State and had been left \$30,000 by an old Calliope Ambulance supporter, the late Arthur Hulme, for this purpose. Since 200 homes had been built between Gladstone and Calliope in the previous two years, the Committee had decided to make use of this money, but in 1972, the State Council gave permission, providing only \$10,000 of the \$30,000 from the Hulme Estate was used.

The Centre was eventually finished, a residence built, and Calliope became a very important station attached to the Gladstone Centre.

With the building of the Smelter at Boyne Island and the consequential influx in the population in the immediate area, the Gladstone QATB Committee established the Boyne Island Sub-Centre in 1981. Ambulance Officer Harold Wilson was the first Officer-in-Charge.

Superintendent Tom Butler passed away in 1982 and was succeeded by the present Superintendent Mr Terry Boyd.

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## *Miriam Vale Sub-Centre*

The birth of a First Aid Service at Miriam Vale, a small town south of Gladstone, was due to the appointment of Mr O. Ford as Shire Clerk of the Miriam Vale district. Previously, he had been Assistant Town Clerk in Bundaberg, where he had also given honorary service as Senior Honorary Bearer at Bundaberg Centre.

In March 1921, with his experience behind and with a keen interest in continuing his ambulance work, he applied to the Gladstone Centre for a first aid kit, which it was happy to provide, and he was appointed an Honorary Bearer of the Gladstone Centre. The service at Miriam Vale was classified as an Honorary Centre.

On 23 September 1921, a public meeting was held to select a committee to endeavour to interest the people of Miriam Vale in ambulance work and its importance to the community. Mr Ford chaired the meeting and also acted as secretary. Present were J. Chapman, G. Wilson, H. Grieves, T. Smith, Mesdames Chapman, Anderson, Smith and Ford and Miss M. Anderson. Superintendent W.G. Daniel of Gladstone sent an apology.

The newly-formed committee decided to ask the Gladstone committee for some means of transport. Mr Fred Kellow, who was the local blacksmith, offered an area of land at the rear of his shop in Roe Street, on which the committee could erect a building, at a cost of £20, or on a 20-year lease. For his generosity, Mr Kellow was made a life member of the Miriam Vale Ambulance.

It was decided to build a small building (20 feet by 15 feet) of weatherboard with a concrete floor, on the site. J. Bates' tender of £20 was accepted.

Monthly functions were held to raise finance and were very successful in raising money and creating a lot of interest in the Centre.

When the building was completed, an invitation was extended to Gladstone Superintendent Daniel and Bundaberg Superintendent Miller to attend the official opening ceremony, which was carried out by Superintendent Daniel, with Superintendent Miller extending his congratulations.

The main building was erected in 1923 and in 1924 the accommodation for staff was complete making it possible to commence first aid classes. The first candidates who presented themselves were, John Bates Senior, John Bates Junior, George Wriede and Arthur Jeffery. In August 1924, the first examinations took place and each year after there was a marked increase in both the number of candidates and their success rate, until in 1927, when out of 900 candidates who sat for the examination in Queensland, Miriam Vale scored second place. This gave Mr Ford great pleasure as an Honorary Bearer, who himself held Nursing Certificates, St John Medallion and seven labels.

As each year went by, the demand on the services increased, until it became clear that a more up-to-date means of transport was necessary. Plenty of assistance was available from the eight people with St John Ambulance qualifications, but sometimes a doctor from Gladstone was needed and they would be told to start off from Miriam Vale and they would be met along the road.

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A formal request to Gladstone for motor transport did not meet with much success until they were confronted with the evidence of the number of cases that were being treated and the mileage that was that was being travelled. Gladstone agreed to supply a Model T Ford. After this had been in service for a considerable time, it was raffled, £80 was raised, and a Dodge was purchased.

The Committee looked after the welfare of the people of Miriam Vale and District from September 1921 until 1930. That year, Miriam Vale Ambulance became a Sub-Centre of the Gladstone Ambulance Centre. Mr Benjamin Bates, having nine years' voluntary service, was appointed Bearer on 23 April, on a salary of £100 per annum. The position became vacant after a short time and Mr Joseph Marshall was appointed as Officer-in-Charge, and he combined his business as a tailor with his Ambulance work. During these years, the finances of the Centre were kept in a healthy state by generous donations and the activities of the Ladies Committee.

The year 1931 was to become a very important one for the Miriam Vale Committee, as all connections with the Gladstone Centre were severed, and Miriam Vale became a self-governing Centre of the QATB. On 28 March 1931, representatives of the Gladstone Centre and Miriam Vale Centre met at the Gladstone Centre where the meeting was presided over by Mr A.T. Power, Chairperson of the Gladstone Centre. It was decided that all property of the QATB under Gladstone's control but held at Miriam Vale, including the Ambulance car and deeds of the property, would be handed over to the Miriam Vale Committee.

Records show that 50 years later, at the direction of the State Council of the QATB, Miriam Vale once more became a Sub-Centre of Gladstone, a decision which was to prove a very expensive one for Gladstone in the ensuing years.

In recognition of his valuable service to the public of Miriam Vale, and the QATB in particular, I would like to include in these records a poem written by Mr O. Ford, the founder of the Ambulance Service in Miriam Vale.

## **Somewhere**

by O. Ford

"Meet Somewhere" how vague the phrase  
Although it meant a lot in bygone days  
Somewhere may be some place unknown  
Word would be flashed to the nearest telephone  
"Come quick an accident," the voice would say  
"A horseman will meet you along the road to show you the way."  
True to the Motto "Ever ready day or night"  
Doors were flung open and the Ambulance was soon out of sight  
On an errand of mercy that's all  
The Ambulance has answered the call  
"That's All" how meaningless this would sound  
If in this mission that is all that can be found  
It's the mission that matters the greatness the call  
The relief from the pain that overshadows all  
Many times it was necessary to call a doctor to hear what he had to say  
"Keep going we will meet somewhere sometime maybe some place unknown"  
But what a relief we always knew that we were not on our own.