

HISTORY OF THE Queensland Ambulance Mount Morgan

In October 1912 Mr H Wanchap organised a meeting of representatives of most of the Friendly Societies for the purpose of discussing the advisability of having an Ambulance Brigade established in Mount Morgan, and as a result a Provisional Committee was appointed to canvass the town for contributions.

On 4 November 1912, at a public meeting it was decided to write to the QATB Executive in Brisbane stating the desire to open a branch Centre. On the 13 November Lieut-Col. Harris, General Secretary, visited the town and fully explained the workings of the Brigade.

On 28 January 1913, a public meeting chaired by the Mayor (Ald J.H. Campbell) was held in the Town Hall. The General Secretary was again present, and stated that the Executive was pleased that Mount Morgan residents were amenable to the opening of a branch. He then explained to the meeting the necessary action to be taken in the formation of a QATB Service. It was decided that the Provisional Committee should be empowered to open a Centre, appoint a Superintendent and conduct the affairs of the branch until the election of a committee by the contributors as provided for in the Brigade Rules. A meeting of the Provisional Committee was then held and Senior Ambulance Officer T.W. Duffill of the Brisbane Centre who had accompanied the General Secretary to Mount Morgan was appointed Superintendent. Mr Duffill, who joined the Brigade in 1902, had given service at the Bundaberg and Ipswich Centres as well as Brisbane.



First Superintendent T.W. Duffill

On the following evening a special meeting of the Provisional Committee was held and the General Secretary dealt with the matter of quicker transport, as the hilly nature of the country would greatly interfere with litter work, it would therefore be necessary to obtain a transport wagon. It was decided to establish temporary quarters at the buildings known as Caxton Chambers situated near the traffic bridge, East Street.

The first Committee consisted of H. Wanchap (Chairperson), T. Whiteley (Honorary Treasurer), F. Brewer, H.O. Cheshire, R. Ruddell, C.F. Smith and W. Snell.

The Committee's first representative on the State Executive Committee was Mr J. Crawford MLA. On 29 January, at an interview with Mr Magnus, General Manager of the Mining Company, it was agreed to take over the control of the Ambulance Corps and an Honorary Centre was established at the mine works. Mr Magnus appointed three members of the company's staff to assist the Committee in dealing with matters relating to the Honorary Centre. A piece of land facing Central Street, was leased to the Brigade at a nominal rental.

In March 1913, a wagon of 'the most up-to-date principle for ease and comfort' was ordered from an Ipswich coach builder at a cost of £92.

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In April, the tender of Mr T.T. Cornes was accepted for the erection of a new ambulance building at the corner of Bedsor and Central Streets at a cost of £429 exclusive of hardwood; the hardwood was being purchased from the Company at cost price. The total cost of the building was £702,2s 8d. The new building was officially opened by the Mayor (Ald W.T. Murphy) on 26 July 1913. Although the weather was showery there was a splendid attendance. On the platform with the Mayor were W.D. Grimes (Chairperson Brisbane Centre), J. Crawford MLA and Lieut-Col Harris (General Secretary). In his address, Ald Murphy said that Mr Wanchap (Committee Chairperson) had told the gathering a good deal about the present up-to-date ambulance methods, but that many present would remember 1886 when Billy Jones and his white horse and dray were requisitioned to carry the sick and injured to the Mount Morgan Hotel, whence they were sent on by coach to the Rockhampton Hospital. Later on, Mount Morgan had its own hospital, and although this was, of course, handier, sapling and bag stretcher transit was almost as rough.

In June, it was found necessary to appoint a full-time ambulance officer to assist the Superintendent in his duties. The appointee was Ambulance Officer W.P. Winchester of the Bundaberg Centre. At the close of 1913 there were nine Honorary Officers and 12 Honorary Members attached to the Centre. The Honorary staff at the mine was under the control of Honorary Officer B.G. Patterson.

The plant in 1913 consisted of one horse (Bryce), wagon fitted with rubber tyres, pole and shafts, convertible stretcher, one set of single harness, one complete Ashford litter, and a collapsible stretcher. The plant at the mine Honorary Centre consisted of one litter complete, one special litter truck, one mining stretcher, and eight collapsible stretchers.

The Mount Morgan Centre was responsible for opening Centres at Banana, Springsure, Wowan, Baralaba and Theodore.

The financial year 1927-1928 was a catastrophic one for the Centre principally due to the Mount Morgan Gold Mining Company going into liquidation. As well as the consequent loss of employment to hundreds of wage earners and reduction in business activity generally throughout the town and district, a fire on 27 January 1928 destroyed practically the whole of the Centre building and stock with the exception of the ambulance vehicles.



Centre building 1928

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Before this unfortunate loss, the Brigade, by economical working, together with the whole-hearted assistance of the public, had kept up a service that was equal to the demands. By the efforts of the Committee and staff this service was unbroken. The liquidators of the Mining Company offered buildings on Carlton Hill free of cost for Brigade accommodation until the Committee could definitely decide the future.

The Committee later purchased the buildings and land for a figure which was highly satisfactory. These premises were occupied until the shift into the present premises.

It is interesting to note that two items saved from the fire still remain in use by the present Committee - the office safe and a billiard table which doubles as a Board Room meeting table.

The present Centre was constructed in 1963 and officially opened by Mr J.A. Turner (State President) on 6 April of that year. The cost of the new Centre and attendant equipment was £15,302,11s. Two-way radio equipment was installed at a cost of £936,16s 6d as the result of a donation from the Mount Morgan Rotary Club.

In February 1980, the previous Centre purchased from the Mining Company was sold at public auction for the sum of \$21,600.

Since the transfer of Superintendent Duffill to the Toowoomba Centre in 1925 the following officers have served in the positions of Superintendent and Secretary at the Mount Morgan Centre:

1925 – 1929	E. Clark
1929 – 1959	C.H. Brewster
1959 – 1962	S.M. Waugh
1962 – 1974	V.L. McKenzie
1962 – 1974	E. Parmenter
1977 – 1983	D.F. Fay
1983 – November 1986	P.J. Denham
Present occupant Superintendent	Ron Fletcher

Since the establishment of the service in Mount Morgan the following people have filled the position of Chairperson:

1913 – 1925	H. Wanchap
August – November 1925	G. Blunden
December 1925 – July 1927	H. Wanchap
July – October 1927	W.S. Jensen
October – November 1927	A.E.D. Smith
1927 – 1928	R.W.U. Hickson
1928 – 1946	T.W. Chennery
1946 – 1952	R. Ames
1952 – 1970	T.W. Peers
1970 – 1988	E.C. Ford OAM
Present occupant Chairperson	S.C. Radloff