

# *HISTORY OF THE* *Queensland Ambulance*

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## *Charters Towers*

The question of an ambulance service at Charters Towers was first raised in Brisbane at the monthly meeting of the Parent Centre Committee held on 4 October 1899. The Secretary (Superintendent R. Nye Stevens) reported that a Brisbane honorary ambulance officer (Mr J.A. Forsdike) had been appointed as Meat and Stock inspector at Charters Towers. The permission of the Committee was sought for the Superintendent to make arrangements to open an Honorary Centre at Charters Towers under the control of Mr Forsdike. Permission was granted.

Mr Forsdike, who had been in charge of the Honorary Centre at Hale Street, Brisbane, subsequently took up residence in Charters Towers. Although the establishment of an honorary centre did not eventuate, he was the driving force in inducing the mayor to call a public meeting and to have Superintendent Stevens present to discuss the question of extension of operation of the Ambulance and Transport Brigade to Charters Towers.

The meeting, convened by Mayor Benjamin, was held in the Town Hall on 12 October 1900, and as reported in the Charters Towers Mining Standard, was fairly well attended.

About 40 people were present including Mr Benjamin (Mayor), J. Forsdike, P. Dwan, R. Gibbons, F.C. Brewer, W. Collins, B. Toll, Rev J. Pike, Dr Vores, some members of the Church Lads Brigade and others.

The Mayor briefly announced the purpose of the gathering, expressed himself as in entire sympathy with the movement, and felt quite satisfied that Charters Towers would respond to a noble call of this kind if required. Mr Benjamin then introduced to the meeting Mr R Nye Stevens from Brisbane who he announced was Secretary/Superintendent of the organisation in Queensland, and would afford full information as to its working and system.



*Rail ambulance car*

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Mr Stevens was received enthusiastically, thanked the Mayor for his kind sympathy in his work and for the attendance of so many that evening. He gave a short review of the inception of the parent Brigade in Brisbane, and the history of its working up to date. The necessity of a branch at Charters Towers would appeal from two stand points - the economic and the utilitarian. The Committee of the Brisbane Brigade, having eight years' experience, had won the confidence of the different centres of population in which the Brigade had worked, and having secured an efficient staff, up-to-date plant and suitable training premises, wished to extend the benefits of ambulance conveniences to other parts of the colony. Charters Towers, from its importance as a centre of population, was therefore cordially invited to become a Centre co-operating with Brisbane.

The city staff is composed of two branches - the permanent, and the honorary. The permanent is composed of men who are tradesmen and mechanics, and are paid regular weekly wage. Their spare time is occupied in making harness, kits, wagons, splints and other ambulance appliances for the Institution. The Honorary staff is comprised of men who follow their own callings in the town through the day, and relieve the permanent staff during the evening hours in turns. It was stated that the honorary staff put in over 10,000 hours of duty at head centre alone, last year. In 1893, 400 cases were treated and 1899 the calls amounted to 6062. For the first six months of the present year 3774 calls have been recorded at the nine centres within a radius of 75 miles of Brisbane.

Dr Vores said he had a good deal of experience in ambulance work in connection with St John Ambulance Association and had given several courses of lectures locally and Dr Huxtable had done the same. Many who had attended had taken a keen interest and had shown themselves specially fitted for the important work. One thing had surprised him and that was the fact that no men from the Railway Department had taken the matter up and further, since Sub-Inspector Durham had left Charters Towers, no member of the Police Department had attended the lectures. The men in both of these departments ought to be fitted to render first aid. He went on to explain at considerable length, the pain which might be saved the patients in time of accident by proper aid at once, but this could not effectively be given by people inexperienced; it required knowledge and a special training for the work.

The Rev J. Pike said he was in hearty accord with the movement and from his observations outside was fully convinced that the people of Charters Towers were the same. There was nothing to mar the success of the movement if started, and further he was sure that many of the Mining Managers would only be too glad to give immediate aid. Rev Pike went further, and said that such men would get permanent employment in the mines. He referred to the help that Mr J. Forsdike was giving to members of the Church Lads Brigade at the present time in the direction of training the boys in ambulance work. Mr Forsdike was an enthusiast, and was on Mr Stevens' staff in Brisbane before coming north. Rev Pike concluded his remarks by asking Mr Stevens the following questions:

1. What permanent staff would be required?
2. What would that staff cost?
3. What plant would be required?
4. What honorary staff would be required?
5. What position should the headquarters for Charters be in?

Mr Stevens replied to the questions as follows:

1. At least two paid officers.
2. £3 per week each.
3. Three improved Ashford Litters with gear and necessary adjuncts.
4. Between 20 and 30.
5. Any place in the centre of town.



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The cost of an honorary staff would be about £6 per head for uniform and badge, etc. The whole cost of management would be borne by the public assisted by a Government subsidy; therefore £200 in locally-raised subscriptions together with the subsidy would be sufficient for the first year's expenditure. All necessary assistance in formation would be cheerfully rendered by the southern Committee including financial help if necessary, but doubted if that would be required in Charters Towers from its well-known reputation.



*Centre building*

Mr R. Russell was the next speaker and strongly supported the move, which could not be valued too highly. The terrible accidents too often occurring in the mines testified to the need for some move in the direction of organising a branch of the ambulance and transport brigade, when it was considered the terrible pain which human beings suffered whilst being brought to the surface from underground after an accident. This alone was sufficient to make people think and act. He thought the meeting should now act, and moved 'that the offer of the Brisbane Centre of the Ambulance and Transport Brigade as set forth by its representative Mr Stevens this evening be accepted by Charters Towers with thanks'. This motion was put to the meeting and carried with applause.

Mr Stevens expressed his gratification at the result, and said that all their gear was interchangeable, and that men of the permanent staff would have opportunities occasionally of visiting headquarters from outside centres and bringing themselves up-to-date in knowledge.

The Chairperson suggested that a Committee would be desirable to act locally.

Mr Russell moved and Mr Toll seconded that the Mayor with Rev J. Pike, Dr Vores, Mr J. Forsdike, and the mover be appointed a Committee with power to add to its numbers for the purpose of arranging all details. The motion was carried.

The Chairperson said funds were the next all-important question and said he would head the list with £5,5s. The following promises were made in the room, Towers Jockey Club £5,5s, B. Toll £1,1s per annum, Rev J. Pike £2,2s donation and £1,1s per annum, P. Dwan £1,1s, J. Clark £1,1s, R. Russell £1,1s. Mr Toll suggested that a circular letter be sent to all mines, mills, societies and institutions,

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seeking donations towards the purpose, and moved a motion to that effect which was seconded by Mr Dwan and carried.

Rev Pike hoped that Mr Toll would be added to the Committee as he was a really good worker. Moved by Rev Pike, seconded by Mr Toll and carried: that a hearty vote of thanks be passed and recorded to Mr Stevens for his kindness in coming to Charters Towers and affording the assistance he has. Mr Stevens briefly replied thanking all for their good will and expressed his satisfaction at the progress made which he would report to his Committee.

The Chairperson said he would call a meeting of the Committee as soon as possible.

The question of Secretary that Mr H.B. Walker be asked to act as Secretary was discussed on the motion of Rev Pike and seconded by Mr Gibbons.

A vote of thanks was accorded to Mr Forsdike on the motion of Mr Clark seconded by Mr Benjamin, it having come out that Mr Forsdike had been a secret worker towards inducing Mr Stevens to come to Charters Towers.

After consideration of a report from Superintendent Stevens the sanction of the Brisbane Committee was given to the establishment of a self-governing Branch Centre at Charters Towers.

The first Committee consisted of Ald J.A. Benjamin (Chairperson), P.J. Allen (Hon Treasurer), R. Russell, B. Toll, J. Clarke, J. Carroll, J.S. Ancell, J.A. Forsdike and D.B. Symons.

Ambulance Officer T.W. Treacy of the Brisbane Centre was appointed Superintendent and Secretary on 11 December 1900 and commenced duty on 22 December 1900.



*First Superintendent T.W. Treacy (first left n middle row), Committee and Staff*

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The first venue for ambulance operations was the fire station in Bow Street. The Brigade then moved to a six-roomed house at the corner of Deane and Ann Streets. The stable and plant room were on an adjoining allotment.

In 1902 the Committee, after recognising that the Centre at that time could only be regarded as purely temporary, purchased land in Gill Street as a site for a permanent Centre.

The foundation stone of the new centre was laid in the presence of 1500 people on 29 March 1903. The contract for construction was let for £1,708.

On 13 June 1903 the new building was officially opened by Mr J.A. Benjamin (Chairperson of the Charters Towers Committee). Because the opening date coincided with the holding of the Annual Show only about 100 people attended.

Certain alterations and additions have been effected over the intervening years and the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade service in Charters Towers is still operated from this stately old building. Ravenswood

On August 1903 the Charters Towers Committee established a Sub-Centre at Ravenswood. This Sub-Centre became a self-governing Centre on 30 July 1904 and the former Officer-in-Charge, Deputy Superintendent H.A. Forsdike was appointed Superintendent and Secretary.

Upon the retirement of Superintendent J.W. Weber who had succeeded Superintendent Forsdike, the Ravenswood Centre reverted to a Sub-Centre of Charters Towers in May 1949 and Mr I. Douglas was appointed Officer-in-Charge.

In May 1955 Mr Douglas resigned because of the state of his health. A special meeting of subscribers was held at Ravenswood to consider the future operations of the Sub-Centre. The meeting recommended that the Sub-Centre be worked with a part-time officer. This recommendation was adopted by the Charters Towers Committee and Mr P. Kean was appointed part-time driver and caretaker. The Sub-Centre was subsequently classified as an Honorary Centre.

On the 17 August 1908 Charters Towers Superintendent Treacy resigned and Superintendent H.A. Forsdike of the Ravenswood Centre was appointed in his stead.

Other officers who have served in the position of Superintendent and Secretary at the Charters Towers Centre are:

<b>1919 – 1931</b>	I. Douglas
<b>1931 – 1939</b>	J.A. Powell
<b>1939 – 1942</b>	A.E. Perrow
<b>1942 – 1961</b>	R.F. Bartlett
<b>1961 – 1975</b>	T.W. Everton
<b>1975 – 1983</b>	R.B.H. Toogood
<b>1983 – 1985</b>	A. King
<b>1985 – 1989</b>	M.W. Hampson
<b>Present Occupant</b>	R. Lackey Superintendent

Since the establishment of the service in Charters Towers the following people have filled the position of Chairperson:



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1900 – 1914	J.A. Benjamin
1914	J. Carroll
1915 – 1916	J. Clark
1917	W. Crocker
1918	T. Chappel
1919	A. Millican
1920 – 1921	J.C. Martin
1922	R. Hawton
1923	T. Chappel
1924	B. Toll
1925 – 1927	W.A. Lewis
1928	H. Welch
1929 – 1930	E.R. Colban
1931	J.F.W. Toll
1932 – 1936	W. Tilley
1937 – 1939	F.G.W. Toll
1940 – 1942	H. Welch
1943 – 1951	J. Dunn
1952 – 1955	L. Gayton
1956 – 1957	R. Spargo
1958 – 1966	T.H.A. Titley
1967	G.A. Griffiths
1968 – 1978	T.H.A. Titley
1977 – 1982	R. Iffinger
<b>Present Occupant</b>	
<b>Chairperson</b>	W.P. Mitchell