



THE BEACON

OFFICIAL QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE AMBULANCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF VICTORIA

Chas Martin O.A.M. Ambulance Victoria Museum



27th Edition – Winter 2023

\$4.00

Snow Spider



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**The Beacon is edited, printed and posted out entirely in-house at Thurgoona, N.S.W.**

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### *Ambulance Victoria Museum*

#### *Membership*

**Just \$30 buys 3 year's museum membership plus 12 posted Beacon magazines.**

**Simply email: Name, Postal, Phone details to: [vintambos@bigpond.com](mailto:vintambos@bigpond.com)**

**Direct debit \$30.00 to: Ambulance Historical Society Vic. Inc.**

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## *Our Chief Executive Visits our Ambulance Museum.*



Our new Ambulance Victoria Chief Executive **Jane Miller** together with three other AV executives **Gary Button**, **Gavin Gusling**, and **Ian Mounsey** visited our museum on July 14' 2023.



Arriving at 0930hrs as stated in Ralph's Curators Report, the visitors were given an enlightening tour of the wonderful collection of Victorian Ambulance Service history that has been preserved. This has been a project over many years originally commencing in the 1980s by enthusiastic paramedics who formed the Ambulance Historic Society Victoria Inc. This group set the foundation for the impressive and proud Ambulance entity we have today.

Although this first attempt fell short due to financing, the basis remained in situ until early 2000. In 2005 Former AV CEO **Greg Sassella**, a strong proponent of retaining ambulance history requested the then Retired Ambulance Association Victoria Inc. (RAAV) Hon. President **Chas Martin** to develop an Ambulance Victoria Museum.

This opportunity arose owing to A.V. leasing a building in Thomastown then not using it. So began our ambulance museum starting with five vintage ambulances retained from the former museum attempt in the 1980s. With Chas Martin's incredible input, by 2012 the Thomastown Ambulance Museum boasted twelve beautifully restored vintage ambulances, and the Thomastown location was outgrown. In 2014, enter new CEO **Tony Walker**, and in a noticeably brief time the ambulance museum was relocated to larger premises at Bayswater. When Chas Martin passed away last year, he left an impressive fleet of 25 vintage ambulances which included a full size disaster bus. Suffice to say the Bayswater located – **Chas Martin OAM Ambulance Victoria Museum** now is also outgrown, with excess vintage ambulances being garaged at various premises.

After meeting the dedicated museum volunteer crew Jane, Gary, Gavin, and Ian were given an overall guided tour of our museum. This included our "Power Point video production shown to group tours. A high point of Jane's visit was the presentation to our museum of the recently approved "Place of Deposit B grade Certificate." This certificate allows our museum to be an approved location to store and allow viewing of aged historic and heritage documents, a special privilege! This is a reward for the effort by our resolute volunteers. Sincere thanks must go to Records Management Team Leader **Ian Mounsey**, for his diligence to secure this certificate. Also, in an unexpected and kind gesture, our C.E. Jane emailed Curator Ralph Casey compliments and appreciation of her visit. Thank you, Jane, Gary, Gavin, and Ian, for witnessing our ambulance preservation efforts first hand.



Chief Executive **Jane Miller** presents the "Place Of Deposit Certificate" to our Curator **Ralph Casey** ASM. In the centre **Ian Mounsey**, Team Manager of AV Records, looks on. Ian's diligent work in securing this prized certificate for our museum finally coming to fruition, and an asset to our organisation.



*Telegrams*



*Phone and*



*Mail*

**Heading up** this segment again are **Roger** and **Joan Vidler** regarding the resurrected toy ambulance. Roger posted off the donation from Shepparton to Ralph Casey our museum Curator. However, due to a quite simple error in the address (not Roger's) the package travelled half way around Victoria and was "Returned to Sender". So we start all over again.

Also, Roger and Joan have made it very clear that **what** they were doing in the old, abandoned sand pit where they found the toy ambulance, is absolutely nothing to do whatsoever with The Beacon and its readers! **Hmmm.**

**Neale Johnson** responded to a Beacon request for information on the original formation of the Ambulance Historical Society Victoria Inc. I am incredibly grateful to Neale for providing this vital detail which now fills this previously unknown gap. Neale's information is in this edition of The Beacon.

**John Atkinson** called me from Sydney, John is a former NSW paramedic and dual member of both our state museums. John is also pro-active at the NSW museum located at Temora and a great supporter of our museum as well. He had called to tell me a friend had contacted him and seen an immaculately restored vintage ambulance at Junee NSW on a car trailer being transported "somewhere." The vintage vehicle was thought to be an early 1920s Ford ambulance. John asked if this gem was on its way to us, I advised him "no, but wished it was as it would give you tachycardia!" John's friend texted me a photo he had taken of it, however when I put the photo on the computer screen it turned out to be the 1926 Dodge owned by **John Mc Corkell**. Terry (Doc) Brooks confirmed this as well, thanks anyway for thinking of us John. A.

**The Ploughman Wodonga** was the catch up point for a cup of coffee and a yarn with Wodonga MICA Paramedics **Mike Fuery** and **Callum Bloomer** on May 3, 2023. Callum is SRU at South Street Branch Wodonga. Mike is now in transmission to retirement from this branch. Once again, a very interesting conversation took place. This time we were able to discuss the ambulance era right through from the mid-1960s to the present. I commenced in the 1960s, Mike in 1980s and Callum in the 1990s, so the conversation covered that entire duration, and the steady progression to where we sit now. The statement was made that given the incredible leap in pre-hospital care during the past decades, where will ambulance be in another 20 years' time? With the technology advancement in vehicles, equipment, pharmaceuticals and treatment procedures one can only ponder the possibilities. It was a great catch up until Callum showed me photos on his mobile phone of the beautiful big Rainbow trout, and the number he caught at Pretty Valley Lake on the top of Falls Creek. The old adage *"Today is a lovely day but give it time and someone will come along and stuff it up!"*

**Thankfully the unique** and vital Ambo sense of humour stays with most of us in retirement albeit imaginative, and often stretched, however still a sanity barrier.

Recently I was sent for a routine ultra-sound on my abdomen. Whilst laying on the bed the female radiographer was pushing the sensor hard into my stomach and under my ribs. I did not have the following problem but I thought "what if a patient had a medical condition causing abdo wind". With all this pushing and pressure it could easily create a significant involuntary discharge of gastric wind with dire consequences. With this thought I began to laugh. The young female radiographer stopped and no doubt thought to herself "this old bloke's finally crossed the line and ready for the giggle house" She asked, "what's wrong?" I explained my mirth to her, she began to laugh with me and said, "unfortunately it does happen – pretty **regularly**"

**My dear friend "Dinky Di"** told me that a new trainee lass started recently in the office. The young girl ordered a pizza for her lunch at a nearby pizza shop and at lunch time she went to collect it and it had just come out of the oven. The pizza cook asked her would she like the pizza cut into 6 or 8 pieces? Her reply was *"Ooh! only 6 please, I couldn't possibly eat 8 pieces!"*



**"Dinky Di"**



## *The Curator's Desk*

**Welcome to all members** and museum friends, I hope you had a safe and pleasant school holiday period with loved ones and others.

Our resident museum tour operator and presenter, **Des Jones** has been away on leave. Des handed over to David Hadj to co-ordinate the tours until he returns. Many of our regular crew have obliged by filling the void in Des's absence. My thanks goes to **David Hadj, David Cawte, Bill Briggs, and Buddy Holley**, with myself backing up the team. This shows that a team effort can move mountains. Our group tours continue to peak with very impressed visitors creating word of mouth conveyance, this leads to further demand for additional group tours.

**On Friday July 14** the highlight of this quarter was the visit of our new Ambulance Victoria **Chief Executive, Jane Miller** together with **Gary Button**, General Manager, Corporate, **Gavin Gusling**, General Manager of Information and Technology, and **Ian Mounsey** from Records Management. The elation of this management visit was the presentation to our museum with "The Place of Deposit B grade certificate". This certificate is only approved at special locations and allows heritage viewing of aged documents. Sincere appreciation to Ian Mounsey for the significant work put in to achieve this particular certificate. Thank you Ian from us all. Our visitors were able to personally witness the immaculate preservation of our state ambulance history and heritage. The internal and external showcasing of our vintage fleet, equipment, memorabilia, and methodology was also an enlightening journey for our guests. This viewing highlighted the proud progression of our Ambulance Service through the decades to where we sit today on the international pre-hospital scene.

**I think it timely** to advise you all of our primary purposes of the Ambulance Historical Society of Victoria. These are set out in the operational manual of our society, and upon which we operate. They are:

- (1) To foster interest and knowledge particularly, but not exclusively, of ambulance and/or ambulance-related history.
- (2) To collect and preserve ambulance items of historical interest.
- (3) To compile and retain an historical record of ambulance publications.
- (4) To restore ambulance vehicles of any vintage and maintain a restored state for display both internally at the museum and to present at an external event to the public.
- (5) To restore ambulance memorabilia.
- (6) To acquire objects and materials of ambulance history
- (7) To foster and promote interest in the Ambulance Historical Society and other Ambulance Museums in other states.
- (8) To raise funds for the fulfillment and perpetuation of the Ambulance Historical Society.

**I would also** like to take this opportunity to raise museum membership, and firstly pass on my sincere appreciation to all members who support our organisation. Membership is our museum life blood and those who belong accompany us on this great journey of preserving our precious state ambulance history. This history belongs to every one of us and honours our ambulance predecessors who carved out our progression through the decades. Membership is open to all and is subsidised by our museum to "give back to members". The very modest \$15.00 P.A. also includes: quarterly posted hard copies of our publication *The Beacon*, free entry to our museum for family and friends, discount merchandise, a family like camaraderie, and much more. Please stay with us on this vital journey and encourage others to join. Adding to this, for those who are looking to fill in a few hours from time to time without obligation, we have some interesting roles. These include working in our library upstairs on computer in our archiving and medical equipment area and assisting in streamlining this section for our visitors.

**Finally but not least**, our Museum quarterly publication 'The Beacon' has, over a six plus year time frame, gone from strength to strength and sought after for our ambulance background. Pete has researched ambulance history and recorded it. This history otherwise would be lost forever, at times a frustrating task, given our history demise. Pete and Barb as a team created *The Beacon* in 2017, and it is entirely edited by Pete, graphically designed by Barb, printed in-house and posted out from Albury to members and other associates. To assist them in this production, our museum has purchased a new Canon Commercial type printer, this machine prints, automatically folds, and staples the magazine ready for posting. Previously, folding and stapling was performed by hand. The replaced printing unit was nearing 12 years old and had reached its UBD.

In conclusion, thank you all for your loyal support and making our museum the proud state entity it has become.

**Ralph Casey ASM**

**Curator.**





## Where Are They Now ?

The great “ **Square Back**” **Ford Galaxy** Ambulance was only near equalled by the **Chrysler Royal** “**High Back**” V8 Ambulance.

This magnificent **Ford Galaxy** vehicle excelled in patient comfort, road handling, and power. The Galaxy was powered by a huge 3.7 Litre (223 C.I.) V8 petrol engine, and 3 speed auto transmission. These ambulance vehicles gradually replaced the VCAS Chrysler Royal Ambulance fleet from the late 1960s onwards.

By comparison: The **Chrysler Royal** was fitted with a 3.8 litre 250 (250 C.I.) V8 petrol engine, 3 speed auto transmission, and afforded patient comfort. Both ambulances were 4 berth capable. Both went like the wind!

Unfortunately our Museum has been unable to secure either vehicle over the past years for their preservation and to take a place in our history.



*Ford Galaxy*



*Chrysler Royal*

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Is the Black Dog snarling at you?

The Black Dog cannot survive unless it is fed, we feed it unknowingly by not recognising its presence! Its presence includes poor sleeping, irritability, anxiety, out of sorts, loss of interest, and loss of appetite. Early intervention is its enemy and deterrent. Today there are professionals from whom to seek early intervention and assistance.

*Talk to your GP or another trusted medical professional.
Discuss it with a trusted friend. It does help.*

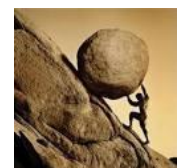
*Phone Lifeline 13 11 14 or Beyond Blue 1300 22 4636.
Someone is waiting to help and share your problem.
PTSD can be treated if you take the first step.*

Courage.

A man dies when he refuses to stand up for that which is right.

A man dies when he refuses to stand up for justice.

A man dies when he refuses to take a stand on which he believes is true.



Martin Luther King Jnr . This was his second final speech before his assassination in 1966 aged 36 yrs.

From the Editor – Winter Beacon

One of the very few downsides of living in this beautiful Murray River region is the tyranny of distance to Melbourne. This factor, combined with a critical family medical emergency, ended all speculation of attending for our new **AV Chief Executive Jane Miller** and her cohorts visit to our museum. It would have been nice to have met Jane and other executives on that occasion. My apologies Jane, and others.

A year has passed since our Museum founder, curator, and friend passed away; **Chas Martin** remains always in the thoughts of all associated with the museum. His great legacy to Ambulance history is remembered daily. I feel sure that if Chas was looking down, he would be thrilled with the great effort being applied by our dedicated crew to continue his tireless work



In the **Autumn edition 26** of The Beacon, I flagged introducing a new section titled “**Our Legends**”. I have since re-considered this introduction as I believe the piece would have the potential to create dissent, if you consider that most who have worn the uniform at some stage would have gone above and beyond the call of duty. This may have been risking personal life or some other selfless act of humanity, so in that sense all are “Legends” therefore best left as is. It is still most worthy to publish and record extraordinary events, situations, and outstanding individual or team efforts that have occurred, or occur within our Service.

This is the **27th edition** of The Beacon. This publication originated in 2017 with the excellent support then of our museum founder and Curator Chas Martin, former A.V. CEO **Tony Walker**, and in particular Chief of Staff, **Kerryn Douglas**. During this period the publication has developed and matured to cater for history reference and general reader interest. As Editor I always welcome feedback, albeit good, bad, or indifferent, this is free speech, providing it stays within that parameter. Some weeks after publication of the last issue (Autumn -No 26) I received an extensive, baseless, and abusive email. This email was directed at my person and integrity, and an affront, the substance of this communication was without veracity or sensible reason. The identity of the author will remain confidential, as will the one or two people hiding behind that person’s pen. I responded to the contents of this email with fact and detail, which will always be the case in these situations. It is sad to think persons resort to this untoward activity when I am sure there must be far greater priorities before them.

I often wonder why Ambulance Victoria, or the Service prior, never retained our Service “Motto” or adopted a new one. Victoria Police retained their motto taking it from Latin to English, (‘Tenez Le Droit’) “**Uphold The Right**”. I am not being bias here; however, I always felt our original **VCAS** motto from 1916 onwards was most appropriate. (“Nulla Vestigia Retrorsum”) “**We never Turn Back**”. This motto compliments both our road and air divisions. I think a motto, or any other form of expression, adds to the pride of having worn or wearing our uniform. Also, after researching and writing of our snow operation, does this specialised operation group have a specific emblem like MICA and our Air Division? You have to admire these colleagues working in the dangerous and freezing conditions on our winter mountain slopes.

It is pleasing to see younger serving Paramedics, in particular female frontliners, joining our Ambulance Museum both Regionally and Metro wise. These are the members that will carry the baton when age overtakes many of us. Their membership offers another asset, this is the benefit of up to date pre-hospital care procedures in-house and at regional events. Having members of the current front line to speak with the visitors of today’s pre- hospital care would be a real plus, and great image for AV. We older clan would love to have them on board and also exchange experiences and developments that have occurred though the decades.

Beginning with the post out of this issue of The Beacon, our museum will include providing a posted copy to all AV C.E.R.T. locations throughout Victoria, with the intention of progressing this to AV, A.C.O. covered areas. As our organisation is operated by former ambulance and associated personnel, the appreciation of the selfless time and dedication given by these persons reaches the highest esteem. This is a small gesture of appreciation for these kin.

The **Beacon** editions normally feature items of mild humour. None of this banter is ever intended to offend. For those who wear, or have worn the uniform, humour is an excellent prescription for stress, while operational or after retirement. When we inevitably look back over our shoulder from time to time and flashbacks occur, reflect to a little event or situation that made you chuckle at the time – it does help!

Keep safe, and keep smiling,

Pete.





Women In Ambulance – Victoria

July 27, 1987, heralded a new era in the Victorian Ambulance Service, and the end of a male bastion of over 70 years. Women were not permitted to enter the service, restricted due to Victorian legislation on lifting capacities. Many thought, and some still do, that this was a ruling of the state's Ambulance Service, this was not the case. The Labour and Industry Act 1958 Regulation 132 (1b) limited the weight a female adult was allowed to carry to sixteen kilograms. With this regulation rescinded, the door opened, and our service would undergo an incredible change, however, a change not to be without many challenges. It seemed that our service was not prepared for the influx of female recruit paramedics which would eventuate. Branches throughout the state did not have dual male and female amenities, so the existing amenities became uni-sex. Until the service tailors got busy sometime later, the new incoming female paramedics were required to wear male uniforms. I imagine this created a little humour and light hearted comments commensurate with that era.

The advent of women entering this long standing "Male Only" domain was never going to be a smooth transition to a Male/ Female Service, particularly 36 years ago. Still within this era females never enjoyed all of the normal life privileges males had, for what reason I will never understand. In the minds of some it was abhorrent to think a female colleague could be superior in qualification and rank, and unfortunately, there were those with a general attitude of disrespect towards women, so for these girls there was a long track ahead to be blazed. Even given that encompassed in the Health Service were female doctors, and of course the female nursing domain, never a problem there, only overall respect and admiration. Over the years I have spoken with many colleagues on this subject, and I never have been able to establish a consensus on the subject. However, one only has to look at the equality in numbers today in Ambulance to establish the success of the entry of female paramedics.

Setting aside the now female front line Paramedics, there has always been, "Women in Ambulance". These are background ambulance staff, telephonists, clerical staff, etc. With that said, in earlier days women played a major role within the ambulance operation state wide and beyond. This role normally varied depending on whether the service was Metropolitan or Regional ambulance. Regional wives/partners were without question unpaid staff of a regional ambulance service, with duties expanding in a smaller branch. If the branch was a one to two man operation this would mean the wife/partner would take the incoming ambulance phone calls, operate the 2 way branch ambulance radio 24/7, take ambulance subscriptions, hold First Aid classes, treat people for minor injuries attending the depot, and be involved in the local ambulance auxiliary. In the regular case of a call out through the night they would be disturbed as well, arising and listening to the activities on the ambulance 2 way radio with a cuppa. In many cases wives hoped there was not a call for "Back Up" as none were available, normally one only Ambo at the scene, and God knows how many patients and the severity of injuries or deceased. These wonderful women of the bush also took the role of their Metro kin described below.

Their Metropolitan wife counterparts were not required to take on these duties, and crews ran "two up", (or they started the shift that way!) There was no "On Call" in Metro (VCAS) as there were set shifts, although you could work well beyond this time and more often did. Wives and partners were the shining light in the background for their man, consoler, councillor, best mate, and confidante. They shared the stresses of the job, and at times no doubt tears. It was from this experience I named all wives and partners in ambulance of that era "***The Background Angels***" Thank you, ladies, you are never forgotten! And you will always be regarded as serving members. Since the inception of male and female Ambulance services, albeit either partner the Paramedic, this background support will always be required and vital in our profession.

Before I conclude this piece, it is essential that I mention the nursing staff of the gone by era and the esteem held for these female counterparts by ambulance personnel. These nurses also trained on the job as we did, the nursing entrée age a tender 16 years. Often these "kids" would be working in Casualty (E.D.) and be witness to horrific sights we would bring to them. There was no standing back, straight into the job that had to be done regardless of what challenge lay before them! This statement is to take nothing away from the nursing profession of today who continue this dedicated, essential, and demanding work with care and empathy, again our appreciation.

Women participation does not end here. Ever since Ambulance Services began, fund raising has been an issue at the top of the agenda. Ambulance auxiliary, normally operated solely by women, has been an essential source of income for ambulance services throughout our nation since services began. In many cases earlier on, an ambulance service would find it difficult to operate without this financial assistance. The ladies of the ambulance auxiliaries put in countless hours to this cause. This included baking all of the normal pastry range, cakes, scones, biscuits at home to sell at the auxiliary shop, preservatives also took pride of place. The women took part in many other fund raising activities such as raffles. In regional areas the Country Women's

Association gave priceless assistance to the Ambulance auxiliaries with fund raising, then donating the proceeds to local ambulance. The activities of Ambulance auxiliaries, C.W.A. Red Cross and others still continue today.

Looking back, there is also an interesting point to be raised in regard to "Women in Ambulance" that also applied in Australia, and many other countries caught up in WW2. Due to our men enlisted in the Armed Services fighting overseas, male resources were very scarce. Women were drafted into normally male only vocations, this included ambulance driving and duties. These ambulance crews were usually drawn from St John female V.A.D.s, and civilian women. The responding women gave a superb account of managing this critical Emergency Service requirement. This particular designation at the time gives rise to bureaucratic questioning. Why on one hand in a set of circumstances were women permitted to lift an unrestricted weight, and on the other, a few years on (1958) placed under weight lifting restriction of 16 kg. I ponder this question, was it well intended for our females' wellbeing or for other reasons?

My front line service in ambulance was in the male dominated era. Over the past 16 years I have again been associated with A.V. resourcing and recording our ambulance history and producing The Beacon quarterly. During this period I have liaised with many female paramedics and background staff. This has been to date a most enlightening and enjoyable experience. However, the stand out of this journey over the past 4 years until March this year is former Chief of Staff **Kerryn Douglas** and her appreciation of The Beacon. Kerryn's prompt assistance, advice, and genuine personal input has been an exceptional contribution to this publication, you may say even makes her a team member. For Barb, and myself, this will be a very pleasant period to look back on, sadly as it said, nothing is forever, Thank you Kerryn!

So there is my perception of all "Women in Ambulance" and those associated. Take a bow girls! Ed.

Ambulance challenge for girls

First to start training course

By CAROLYN JONES

ANDREA Wyatt and Patricia Richards made history yesterday when they became Victoria's first female ambulance service recruits.

For the first time since the Metropolitan Ambulance Service began operation 100 years ago, the two trainee ambulance officers will be training with and eventually working alongside men.

In a move described by the Health Minister, Mr White, as long overdue, the entry of Andrea, 25, and Patricia, 26, into the ambulance profession was made possible only by amending the Victorian Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Women had previously been prevented from entering the service by a regulation restricting to 16 kg the weights they were allowed to lift.

Patricia and Andrea yesterday joined about 12 other recruits from all over Victoria to begin a rigorous three-year training course.

Andrea and Patricia, who wear the same regulation trousers, boots, shirts and jumpers as male trainees, said they could not see any problems in joining a male-dominated field.

A trained nurse, Patricia said she regarded the ambulance profession as a more challenging medical-related field.

"So far it's been all right but we've been



● Andrea Wyatt, left, and Patricia Richards ... ready for the challenge.

told to expect some antagonism from the men," she said.

Andrea studied medicine for four years and until last week was a range co-ordinator for clothing company Country Road.

"I decided to apply for

the ambulance service as I saw it as a related field to what I'd been studying," she said.

"I think it will be very rewarding and challenging and having a medical background we'll fit in more easily."

The Ambulance

Service's regional superintendent, Mr David Webb, said: "The Metropolitan Service is very keen to increase the numbers of women and we look forward to, in the future, witnessing a more equal mix of men and women in the service."

Pioneers of Our Ambulance Historical Society Victoria Inc.

The Beacon is most grateful to former AV paramedic **Neale Johnson** for responding to our request for this information. Neale's input now fills a gap in this history previously unknown. The Beacon can now complete the former record of this most important section of our Ambulance history. Thank you, Neale.

Following our phone conversation I thought you might be interested in some information for the Pioneer section of The Beacon. In the early 1980's the late **Ron Jacobs**, MAS, together with the late **Pam Smith**, Ambulance Officer Training College, and myself decided to establish an Ambulance Historical Society.

At that stage we hoped we may be able to gather some vehicles and have them on display in a garage facility. It was not long before we had obtained seven vehicles from MAS. The vehicles were at the end of their operational life. These vehicles were stationed at the Healesville Branch and unfortunately exposed to the elements. The vehicles consisted of: The original MICA 1, 283, two Ford Fairlanes with a Mustang motor, and four F100 Series.

My main concern at this time was trying to get the vehicles undercover. The Fire Brigade was very kind and offered us garaging at their facility at Dawson Street, Brunswick. There was no possibility of having the vehicles on display at this location but at least they were undercover and safe from any vandalism.

During this time we had formed the Historical Society and we were contacted by a Mr **Neil Taylor** who was the owner of Victoria House Private Hospital.

It appeared he had two historical vehicles for sale and that is when we became aware of the existence of the 1914 Talbot Ambulance and the 1942 Chevrolet Ambulance, both in military livery. At this stage the bank account of the Society was very low and although we were interested, it was going to need a commitment from management to make these purchases possible. At this time Mr **David Webb** was in charge. I went to see him. We had been in negotiation with Mr Taylor and his asking price was \$30,000 for the two. After some time he dropped the price to \$26,000. I felt our chances of receiving such a large sum from the Service was remote but to my pleasure David Webb gave us the \$26,000 to cover the purchase of the vehicles and another \$4,000 to help our bank balance.



Photo of the 1914 Talbot and Dodge Vintage Ambulances taken at the former Ambulance Museum Thomastown.

Unfortunately, we still did not have a location to display the cars.

We were however able to hire out the vehicles and the Talbot was used in the filming of both Gallipoli and Nancy Wake. This was a great help to build our bank balance. The vehicles were also used for various displays covering both city and country services.

Unfortunately, there was a change of management at MAS and the Historical Society was very low on their list of priorities. Our funds had been exhausted and the Society lapsed.

After a period of time I was elated to hear that **Chas Martin** had been approached and asked to resurrect the Historical Society and the rest is history.

I could not be happier than to see what the Museum became under Chas and I enjoyed my time with him assisting when he had groups come through the Museum.

I hope this is informative and I would especially like Ron Jacobs and Pam Smith to be acknowledged for their input.

Neale.

Chinese Proverb - Confucius Say : "Man who streak on crowded football ground only has very small agenda "

Vintage Ambulance Showcase

The 1926 Nash Ambulance



This unique vehicle was normally powered by a 6 cylinder 47 H.P. petrol engine, with a 3 speed transmission. However, the engine failed and a replacement engine or parts could not be sourced. Our industrious in-house mechanics were able to fit a 6 cylinder Holden engine replacement. This allows this vintage ambulance to be driven to regional events as is most of the fleet.

This vehicle is named in tribute to former Paramedic and WW2 Veteran **Jack Vaux**. Jack endowed \$18000.00 to our museum and this vehicle was purchased with that bequest.

1942 Chevrolet Ambulance

This model Chevrolet vehicle was powered by a 6 cylinder 235 Incline OHV petrol engine, developing 83 Horse Power – manual transmission 3 forward gears and 1 reverse gear. Manufactured by General Motors USA., the chassis and engines were imported to Australia and the body work completed



Prior to being purchased by the **Metropolitan Ambulance Service** in 1989 from a military museum, the Chevrolet ambulance appeared in the films : The History Of Nancy Wake ---- “The White Mouse”, and the film “Blondie”---- The life of Marilyn Monroe. The Ambulance was used by the RAAF during WW2

Both these vintage ambulances are on display at our museum, and at times feature at regional events.

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## Ambulance History Presentation

**Our Museum** also offers the public external guest speakers, the speakers present the history of our service, titled:

### ***The inception, progress and development of the Ambulance Service in Victoria.***

Covering the period from 1887 to today, this is a most interesting presentation of our state ambulance history. The presentation is all encompassing and takes in actual ambulance cases, and also disasters such as **West Gate Bridge Collapse 1970**, and the **Southern Aurora Train Smash, Violet Town 1969**.

Also available is the visual PowerPoint video presentation of our ambulance history and heritage. This version is presently used in-house for group visits.

**Bookings are essential: Email – [ambulance.historical@outlook.com.au](mailto:ambulance.historical@outlook.com.au) Phone – 0419 619 430**

These presentations are ideal for Events, Meetings, and other Venues requiring a guest speaker or visual presentation.

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Words of Wisdom.

One wonders at such a time and place and in the presence of such beauty if, in a deep and inexpressible sense, this may be a basic meaning of life itself.

Perhaps the ultimate end of human existence is in being able to respond to the beauty, the everlasting peace, the glorious wonderment of the mystic world itself. Norman Vince Peale



Our Guest Queensland Ambulance Service Writer



*Introduction - **Stephanie Nixon** is an Advanced Care Paramedic in Charleville, Queensland working for the Queensland Ambulance Service (QAS). Steph has been working for the QAS for the past ten years. She has worked predominantly in the rural and remote areas within the South West of the state but also worked around the Ipswich region. Stephanie's article will give a brief overview of the history of the QAS with some photos and further resources sprinkled in. I think it is really important to know where our state counterpart Paramedicine profession has started from to really appreciate how far we have advanced in such a small time frame overall and how this profession could expand in the future. Thank you Steph!*

Stephanie's Contribution to The Beacon

The first ambulance service in Queensland started on the 12th of September 1892. The first meeting was held by Military medic **Seymour Warrian** in Brisbane. The first ambulance station was opened in Brisbane and at the time the only equipment was a hand held stretcher, vehicles came later. What started as the City Ambulance Transport Brigade grew to over 90 establishments at multiple locations around the state and became known as the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade (QATB).

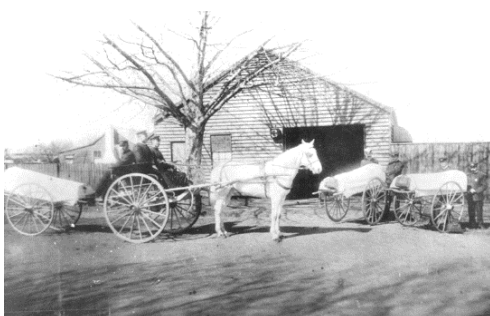
In 1991 the QAS was established and incorporated the 96 QATB stations throughout the state. The name reflected the phenomenal changes that had occurred to the service and how it didn't just simply offer transport. It still took until 2013 for the QAS to fall under the banner of health despite the numerous medical skills and procedures performed by Paramedics. Prior to being under Queensland Health, QAS fell under the Department of Emergency Services and the Department of Community Safety.

Air ambulances were introduced to reduce the transport time to larger hospitals after several deaths around the state. Rotary retrieval has been possible since 1979 and fixed wing Royal Flying Doctors Service (RFDS) and Lifeflight have been occurring since 1934. Prior to this the main transportation was by road or rail. These commutes took extensive time and resources. The first rail ambulance was started in 1918 and in 1990 the final rail ambulance was removed from service. Rail ambulances were used by ambulance stations such as Blackall, Dalby, Charleville, Atherton and Goondiwindi. Air ambulances started in Cloncurry and now span the entirety of Australia.

The QAS now responds from 302 locations which is a phenomenal increase from the 96 it started with in 1991. These locations encompass the majority of Queensland. The QAS also runs a hospital-based Ambulance model which allows small communities access to an ambulance vehicle but staffing it with Queensland Health nurses. This model allows access to pre-hospital emergency care throughout towns that may otherwise need to wait hours for an ambulance. Vehicles are now equipped with lots of gizmos and gadgets and the skills, medications and knowledge of Queensland Paramedics, and paramedics throughout the world, is continuing to expand.

There are several spots around Queensland that have displays of past equipment, uniforms, vehicles and stretchers that are worth a stop if you are near them on your travels. Wynnum Museum, Charters Tower Museum, Highfields Pioneer Village Museum and Australian Workers Heritage Centre all have differentiating levels of displays. More information on these can be found at <https://www.ambulance.qld.gov.au/history.html> if you are interested. This website also has a range of symposium links that depict the changes throughout QATB and QAS. One that I found very interesting was **Prof Pearn** AO, Symposium Chair & Mr **Mark Davis** AM discussing the changes to symbols used throughout the ambulance history in QLD. This can be found by following this link <https://vimeo.com/278622688>.

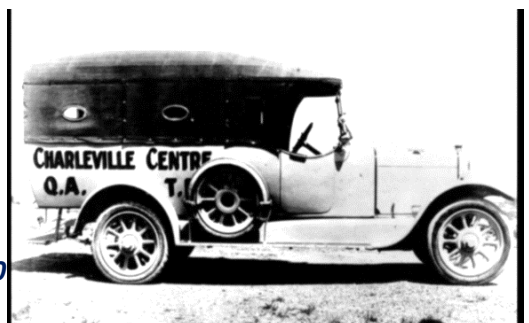
All ambulance services throughout Australia have their own unique history. Moving into the future it is important to form a solid evidence base for Paramedicine so we can continue to improve the profession and grow on past achievements.



Toowoomba Ambulance 1903



Charters Towers Rail Ambulance 1920



Charleville Ambulance 1924



Ambulance Service Victoria - Colleagues' Ambulance Tribute



As noted in the Autumn issue of The Beacon, a special uniformed Ambulance Service Victoria Tribute/Eulogy is available to all personnel and their partners who have served in any capacity of our Service throughout Victoria.

This is a formal ambulance-dedicated presentation under the badge and uniform of which we proudly served. Colleagues and partners obituaries are also available in The Beacon publication, with submitted details.

----- The Tribute is by request only -----



Special Offer to Museum Members.

30 Years of Women in Ambulance.

This is a quality presentation printed by Ambulance Victoria.

Hard cover and dust cover, strongly bound,
Colour photos.

A wonderful history keepsake.

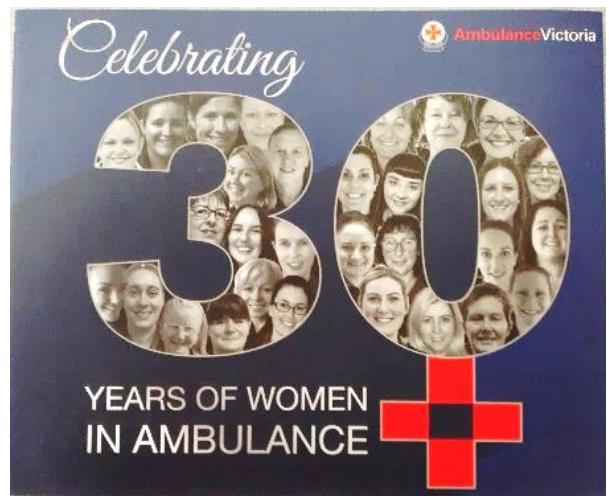
Normally \$23.99 Posted.

Special Offer \$16.99 Posted.

Simply Email your name and postal address to:
vintambos@bigpond.com and deposit **\$16.99** into:
Ambulance Historical Society Vic. Inc.

BSB No. 704-230 A/C No 100167781

In field insert: **Surname** (essential) and **Book.** -
Immediate posting out from order.



Looking Back on our Victoria Police Counterparts.

A friend of mine, retired Victoria Police Inspector **Ross Smith**, sent me these photographs. For those who can recall, this was a vehicle from the very first fleet of Victoria Police Highway Patrol "**Candy Cars**" 1973. Ross recounts: "In this era the Victorian road toll was exceeding 1000 per year (20) weekly and the attendance then at MCAs was just Ambos, Police and Tow Trucks, only pinch bars, no Rescue teams or "Jaws". We worked as a team. The Candy Cars were G.T. V8 Falcons, and few traffic offenders could out run these power units".





Our Vehicle Co-ordinator and In, Out and About.

Two of our museum stalwarts, amigos **Gary Dole** and **Terry Brooks** were up the bush carrying the batten of our history at Jamieson in the Mercedes Benz ambulance.

This was a dual trip for a film shoot over a 4-day period in two parts. Gary and Terry travelled to Jamieson on the Tuesday in cold and wet conditions. Their accommodation that night prior to the next day's filming was in a tourist park cabin. This was fine except there was an absence of an en-suite, so a walk to the amenities was necessary. This would remind you of several decades ago when the old pan dunny was located way up the back yard. Then sure enough in the middle of a freezing cold, wet, and windy night there was a

need to use it with the "telephone book" toilet paper. Normally this unpleasant venture was with the lighting assistance of a torch or lamp.

After the next day's 0700hrs filming start on a cold day, the pair needed to travel home to Melbourne for an appointment and returned Thursday evening for session two next day. Unfortunately, they only had the same accommodation as the filming had booked out the small town. But for me it would have been a warm pub or similar, with in-house facilities and meals.

Their sojourn ended with the film shoot at Jamieson on the Friday. They left Jamieson and off to Benalla on Friday to attend the Winton Historic Show with a vintage ambulance display Saturday and Sunday. Inclement weather on Sunday brought an earlier than expected return home from this regional event, I imagine then it was feet up at home with a glass (or two) of red, and early night, and off at 0600hrs to the Monday work schedule at the museum.

Where, and how, do you get volunteers like that?



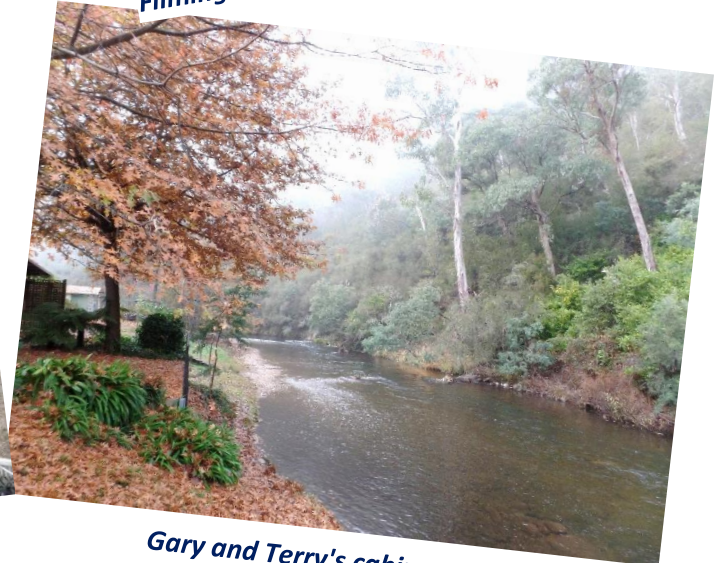
Main Street of picturesque Jamieson.



Filming crews ready to depart to filming location.



*Filming at location in the hills.
(Gary Dole at door of Ambulance)*



Gary and Terry's cabin on the river.

Jamieson

And Terry Brooks again! This time the “Doc” has been out and secured another vintage ambulance for our museum, and it is a donation! (Silver tongue!) Following is Terry’s account of this very generous gesture:

Hi all,

Today I had **Chris and Cheryl Harwood** hand over their beloved ex variety bash 1987 Ford Falcon Ambulance lovingly called “AMBO” as a donation to the Museum for its collection. The unit is an ex Wimmera Ambulance with original reg being DEV 876 the Ambulance was on club registration and not transferable. To overcome this a Vic. Roads permit was obtained to move it to its temporary storage site in Melton.

The unit has had a new head fitted and is mechanically sound, it runs on dual fuel and the gas tank has 5 years certification on it , the front end had been overhauled 5 years ago and the rear has gas shock absorbers.

The body needs attention where the fibre glass meets the steel on the roof and other minor areas. The interior is minus the stretcher; However, the original floor panels and cupboards are all in place. There will be a full appraisal of the vehicle’s bodywork prior to when Bill and Gary begin the mechanical restoration of the unit. Following this the body, interior, painting and re-badging will take place. Look for the photos of the restored 1987 Ford Falcon Ambulance in a future issue of The Beacon. **Terry Brooks**

A sincere thank you and appreciation to Chris and Cheryl from us all here at the Bayswater Museum. Ed.



Chris and Cheryl handing over the 1987 Ford Falcon Ambulance to Terry Brooks (Centre).

A Pleasant Surprise Visitor

Monday July 17, the Monday maintenance crew received a most pleasant surprise visitor, no other than our late curator’s wife and co-museum developer **Marg Martin**. Marg took advantage of an opportunity of transport to our Museum, and just walked in much to the delight of all in attendance. The Monday crew stopped work to welcome her, and Ralph soon had Marg in Chas’s old office with a cuppa in her hand. Old times were reminisced and Marg was introduced to the two sisters **Ann and Maree**. These two ladies are now the “ Angels of the museum kitchen” Ann and Maree provide (at their own expense) a Monday buffet meal to all volunteers,



Curator Ralph Casey chats with Marg Martin

equal to or above Jamie Oliver, but more of it, and more variety. Maree and Ann were told of days gone by when Marg was the “Goddess” of 0500hrs morning home baked scones, jam, and cream for our museum group patrons. These wonderful treats of yesteryear will live on in the memories of all who were blessed to sample Marg’s “gourmet extraordinaire”. The first question asked when booking a tour “do you still have the scones, jam, and cream”? Ralph normally has to break the sad news!

You will note in the wall dedication behind Marg and Ralph, Chas beaming down, and Marg and Chas together on the right hand side.

Thanks, Marg, for the most pleasant surprise visit.

Ed.

Essential Ambulance Humour an Outlet in the Face of Tragedy

A few older retired Ambos will remember some of the names mentioned in the following article. This is a true account, however the minutes of this meeting as many other vital records of our history no longer exist.

The West Gate Bridge Disaster occurred at approximately 1140hrs on October 15, 1970, claiming the lives of 35 workers and injuring many others. Those who had attended in a specific role or were associated H.Q. wise were summoned to a de-briefing at Latrobe Street H.Q. at 0900 hrs the next day, October 16.

From memory, in attendance were C.E.O. **Gordon Ortmann**, S/O **Jack Smith**, (both non-attendees) Deputy Superintendent **Bob Donald**, D/Os, **Norm Mills**, **Peter Walsh**, **Bill Long**, S/Os **Ross Eastwood**, **Gary Pink** and myself. I think there may have been one or two more I cannot recall. S/O **Chas Martin** had worked all night at the scene and was excused. The de-briefing began with the purpose of evaluating our performance at the disaster, successes, failures, the grey areas, and Emergency Service counterpart interaction, together with other aspects. This meeting progressed for around 3 hours, with each person in a specific role giving their account of the disaster, and the details of that role each one had been charged with. As you will imagine these reports were not very pleasant and of an extremely macabre nature. Then came general discussion on where we were lacking and what would be required in the case of another disaster of this magnitude.

The evaluation was a most complex issue, suggestions, experiences, problems, and so on going back and forward on this subject. Those of us who can remember both **Norm Mills**, and **Jack Smith**, would have noted the following: Norm was a reserved and quietly spoken fellow of serious persona. Jack Smith a mature aged man, was an outgoing character who always had a humorous quip at the ready. So, in the serious course of the issues in discussion above, Norm, almost diffident, spoke of the need to have portable toilets available at call to be placed on site at a future disaster scene quoting : “ *I really needed to relieve myself, and the only place I could find was behind a tree*” Here was Jack’s awaited opening!!, “ *It must have been a big tree!!*” Jack quipped! This brought a roar of laughter all round. Norm’s face flushed pink, but he did manage a half bashful smile. Both of them were good blokes. R.I.P. Norm and Jack, I often look back to those colleagues, both surviving and those passed on from that fateful day in 1970.

The de-briefing closed at approximately 1200hrs, Gary Pink and I, excused from duty for the remainder of the day, sought well deserved refreshments down the road at the old International Hotel. Ed.

For Interest : *I am nearing completion of an approximately 25-30 page feature of The West Gate Bridge Disaster, titled “West Gate – The Disaster”.*

Prior to the 50th Anniversary 2020 of this National rated industrial accident. I was able to obtain, with the grateful assistance of VicPol, MFB/FRV, ST John Ambulance, Ports and Harbours, GTV 9 (Ray Rowe) The Salvation Army, and others, personal accounts of roles undertaken, graphic descriptions, and photographic images by members of the above Services at the peak and beyond this disaster.

This documentation includes an account from the very first person at the scene, from a nearby workshop and St John Ambulance member, also the first Victoria Police member arriving at the scene.

As age takes its inevitable toll on those of us who attended and provided these experiences, this documentation will become a most important account of our ambulance and associated Emergency Services history of the West Gate Bridge Disaster.



Collapsed section of the fallen bridge.



Injured and deceased workers awaiting Ambulance transport.



Ambulance Victoria Museum

Our AHSV, Chas Martin OAM Ambulance Victoria Museum, **Annual General Meeting**

Will be held on Sunday September 24, 2023 at 1030hrs.

The meeting will be at our museum - 1/55 Barry Street Bayswater Vic. 3153

Under the Rules of The Association, there will be no election of office bearers this year (2 year term)
An indication of your attendance or otherwise will be appreciated for light catering requirements.

Please advise Sec. David Cawte - Email: dcawte@bigpond.net.au Mob. 0408 592 318

Signal 8 Ambulance Service Victoria.

For those not familiar with “Signal 8 Ambulance Service Victoria” activities and its inception, I offer the following information.

In October 2020, retired paramedic **Ted Van Dyken** was hospitalised, and like all of us bored to the point of despair with your mind going around and around. For some reason his thoughts touched on creating a Face book communication site for retired Ambos and maybe others. With this thought harnessed, Ted began phoning ambulance contacts and bouncing this initiative off them with a positive result. Within a month, Signal 8 had 30 members and growing like wildfire, soon that figure became 500 members, and now ‘Signal 8’ has a membership of over 1200. This occurred because the concept offered retired colleague connection, camaraderie, personal stories, humour, memories of days and events gone by, personal support, banter, news, and much more ---- And **Membership is free!**



Ted Van Dyken

The “Signal 8” concept is to be highly commended. This Facebook meeting place for all former and present Ambulance personnel has delivered exceptionally well, bringing enjoyment and information to members. The site and members are also instrumental in supporting each other who may suffer with “The Dog”.

New members are always welcome. To join, Google “Signal 8 Ambulance Service Victoria” and follow the simple membership instructions.

Like more information?

If you read an article in The Beacon that is of interest to you and you would like more information, please contact The Beacon Editor with the relevant details. We will happily provide you with what information we have, and in cases, and if possible, research further. Email Pete, at: vintambos@bigpond.com The information will be emailed to you, or in other cases posted to you. This is entirely complimentary from our AHS Chas Martin OAM Ambulance Victoria Museum as a service to members. Also back copies of The Beacon can be arranged.

New Members as of 31st July 2023: We welcome the following new members to our museum family and hope you enjoy being a part of this great Victorian Ambulance heritage.

**Russell Nelson – Rowville, Rob Phillips – Montmorency, Greg Prosser – Mooroopna,
Ray Rowe – Dingley Village, Carolann Thomson – Forest Hill**

Please join in our museum activities. We are a family-like organisation offering a friendly atmosphere and camaraderie. We take part in both museum internal activities, and external vintage vehicle display events, locally and throughout regional Victoria. Members are welcome to attend and/or participate. Contributions to The Beacon are always sought after. Your AHS Museum membership is yours to enjoy. So again, a warm welcome!

Reflecting on Six Decades of Ambulance Service in Victoria

I have reached back into the 1960s as many of the initiatives in the context of this account did not reach fulfillment until the 1970s, or for that matter beyond this decade.

The 1960s and 1970s brought significant change to the Victorian Civil Ambulance Service (VCAS), over 40 years on from its inception in 1915/16. This of course taking in also the 15 Victorian Regional Ambulance Services across the state forming the umbrella of Ambulance Service throughout Victoria, established in 1948 by the Hospital and Charities Commission.

The era of the ‘Ambulance Driver’ effectively ended in 1961; the catalyst for this significant change being the establishment of the Ambulance Officers Training Centre (AOTC) at Geelong. This initiative was to be the beginning of the new breed of paramedic, bringing pre-hospital care into a new age. Prior to this advanced training regime, ambulance personnel were trained to the St John standard certificate of qualifications, and promotions were normally gained according to time served and/or “captain’s calls” which at times included elements of nepotism.

After a short trial period at Geelong, the AOTC was relocated to “Mayfield”, formerly a private boarding school, at East Malvern in metropolitan Melbourne. The centre remained there for a number of years, with subsequent locations being South Melbourne and Albert Park.

The AOTC introduced an entirely new dimension to ambulance care, emergency techniques, midwifery, and the advanced equipment of that era. Courses ranged from Ambulance Officer (A/O) Grade 2 and 3, Station Officer (S/O) Grade 2 and 3, and District Officer (D/O) or Deputy Superintendent—depending on whether the officer was part of a metropolitan or regional ambulance service. The AOTC course progressed to include a Certificate of Applied Science.

With the opening of the AOTC, the ambulance training regime followed the same criterion as the nursing profession’s practical on-the-job training. A new ambulance recruit immediately commenced front-line duty at H.Q. with senior personnel. This work experience was combined with a 3-month training program, followed by an A/O Grade 2 assignment system culminating with a 2-week or 4-week residency course at the AOTC.

For a recruit, both the course and the Grade 2 AOTC course had to be successfully completed or the probationary officer’s tenure would be terminated. After an officer obtained A/O Grade 2 status, there was no obligation for that person to proceed to higher qualifications, although most continued with their career development for patient care interests and promotional reasons.

By the 1970s, ambulance personnel who were in service prior to the advent of the AOTC were given the opportunity to advance their ambulance nursing skills through AOTC. If not, take up patient transport role or alternatively retire.

The 1960s also saw the introduction of the Victorian fixed-wing Air Ambulance Service. This service was implemented in 1962, on a 12-month trial period with a new Aero Commander Shrike twin-engine aircraft. The trial period being a great success, the Air Ambulance Service began in earnest, opening up emergency medical care to regional and remote areas of Victoria. The original fixed-wing Air Ambulance cases were covered by VCAS Air Flight Nurses, whereas crews of today are specially trained Mobile Intensive Care Ambulance (MICA) paramedics. A great benefactor of these early air ambulance services were large construction projects such as the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme.

Other breakthroughs of the 1960s included the humidity crib, an infant lifesaver in both road and air ambulances, along with the “air splint”. Meanwhile, a degree of infection control began, with ambulance officers provided gowns and masks and ambulances regularly fumigated. Strangely however, I do not recall disposable gloves were ever issued in this duration, even in cases of infectious disease. Although this item may not have been in production in this era.

Advancements in ambulance training and equipment came at a critical time as the 1960s and ‘70s were known as the “Deadly Decades”. During 1970, in Victoria alone, 20 persons perished on state roads each week, a total of 1,076 for that year. The national road toll for the same year was 3,798 deaths. Simultaneously, the “cardiac epidemic” across the Western world was also claiming lives at an alarming rate. As a result, if an ambulance crew was not attending a road fatality, these members would likely be at a cardiac case, often in VF and fatal. Medical science in this era had not connected smoking, obesity, blood pressure, cholesterol, and other factors to heart disease, hence this result.

In 1971, the appalling loss of life to cardiac disease prompted Royal Melbourne Hospital (RMH) cardiologist Dr Graeme Sloman, who had an intense interest in pre-hospital care, to visit the MICA initiative. District Officers, **Wally Ross** and **Wally Byrne**, were selected for the trial at RMH and trained in the RMH coronary

care unit. Under the supervision of either **Dr Sloman** or **Dr Kitchen**. These first two MICA paramedics attended cardiac cases with either of these two doctors, by direct request, or at the request of ambulance crews attending a cardiac case. By 1972, this MICA crew was operating without doctor accompaniment, enabling the concept to be expanded more expediently. So began a national and world first, and another vital step forward in paramedical training, capability, equipment, and pre-hospital care.

There were many disparities between the metro Melbourne and rural ambulance operations. For instance, rural ambulances were crewed “one up” with very little or no back-up, even though distances to hospital care were generally far greater than those of their city counterparts. MICA also was not introduced into rural ambulance services until around the mid-1990s, some 20 years after its establishment in metro operations. This was an extreme disadvantage for rural patients.

Victoria experienced two major disasters in a short period of less than two years apart. On February 7, 1969, at approximately 0710 hrs, the Southbound Sydney to Melbourne luxury sleeper train crashed head on with a Northbound freight train at Violet Town North East Victoria. Miraculously only 8 persons were killed however 117 were injured, some critically. Regional Ambulance Services of *Goulburn Valley Ambulance Service*, and *North Eastern Victoria Ambulance Service* were called on and put to test with this disaster and both shone out admirably. A Coroner’s inquest chaired by Melbourne coroner Mr **H (Harry) Pasco** determined that the driver of the Southern Aurora had a cardiac condition and was either comatosed or dead at the controls of the train.

At 1140 hrs on October 15, 1970, Australia’s worst industrial disaster occurred, the catastrophic “West Gate Bridge Collapse” claiming 35 lives. Victorian Civil Ambulance Service (VCAS) alone carried out with outstanding credibility, the major medical evacuation role at this tragic disaster. The then Premier of Victoria, **Sir Henry Bolte** called a Royal Commission into this disaster, which revealed disturbing results, in terms of construction management of this massive bridge project.

In 1970, the Regional Peninsula Ambulance Service began what is believed to be the first helicopter ambulance service in Australia, operating out of Tyabb near Western Port Bay. The helicopter was known as “The Angel of Mercy” and saved the lives of many trauma and medical patients, despite being restricted to operating only in the Peninsula area and on highways. The ambulance helicopter division soon expanded to services based in five localities and crewed by highly trained MICA paramedics. This operation is today named the Helicopter Emergency Medical Service (HEMS). All helicopter paramedics are trained in remote emergencies and line rescue in all conditions and situations 24/7.

The absence of women in ambulance until the late 1980s was not dictated by Victorian ambulance authorities. The Victorian Industrial Labour and Industry Act 1958 prohibited women lifting more than 16 kilograms. A review of the Act in 1987 heralded the well overdue entry of female paramedics into Victorian ambulance services, creating a new dimension within the profession.

Throughout the period leading to advanced pre-hospital medical care one could say pain control was virtually non-existent; notwithstanding morphine being carried by rural ambulance services from 1961 to 1964, for administration only by a medical practitioner. This was a hit and miss process as it depended on a doctor being present when required which was not likely at an MCA. Trilene inhalant was introduced across the state in 1964, however this products pain-control efficiency was “questionable” at best. This undesirable situation would begin to change with the development of MICA in 1971 and the flow on training to general paramedics. Sadly a great deal of pain was suffered by many patients for very long periods prior to, and during ambulance transport to hospital due to the lack of vision of ambulance administrators.

1999 brought the closure of the AOTC and tertiary-based paramedical qualifications were introduced, whereas prior to this, human resources were drawn from all walks of life. The tertiary system has mainly created a virtually younger paramedic whereas, prior to the tertiary system, ambulance recruits were drawn from all walks of life.

In conclusion, we should look upon all our ambulance predecessors with gratitude. These colleagues of past decades were the pioneers of today’s excellent working conditions and our world-leading road and air ambulance services and pre-hospital care of the 21st century.



Road and Air changes through the decades.



Ambulance Victoria Museum

Help Wanted! Due to age retirements, our Museum **urgently** requires volunteer/s assistance with computer archiving of our library and vintage medical equipment. This is interesting work in a comfortable and friendly environment, located upstairs. **No obligation** applies, as we will appreciate any hours that can be given helping to preserve our proud Ambulance History. This is a great reward for the volunteer/s participants working with a dedicated crew for a vital program.

Please contact our museum Email: ambulance.historical@outlook.com or phone

Mob: 0438 980 006. Once our volunteers come, they never leave our museum!

Temora, NSW Ambulance Museum Visit, 2023

Representatives from our Chas Martin OAM Ambulance Victoria Museum will visit our NSW interstate counterpart at their NSW Ambulance Museum at Temora NSW. This will be over a 3 day period with 2 overnight motel stops, October 17th 18th & 19th. Our museum has always maintained a close rapport with our interstate colleagues. Places are very limited as travelling will be in a 12 seater mini-bus, the envisaged cost per person is \$250-\$300 for all up expenses, (**excluding** meals). Members interested in attending,

Please email or phone our Assistant Curator, Terry Brooks. 0416 760 310

Email: ford.prefect1948@gmail.com

Heyfield Celebrate 80 years of Ambulance Service

On Sunday July 9, 2023, the small timber and farming town of Heyfield celebrated 80 years of an ambulance service to the Heyfield district. On a cool, showery Winter's day, a variety of people attended the 80 years celebration of the commencement of a Heyfield Ambulance Service held at the Heyfield Ambulance Station.

Active volunteer Museum members **Neil Hall and Frank Abela**, both former L.V. & D.A.S. Ambos, collected the vintage 1965 Studebaker, an original Sale H.Q. vehicle, to show at the Heyfield celebration. Unfortunately, en-route South of Traralgon, the Studebaker began to experience mechanical problems. The crew then turned around and headed back but broke down at Langwarrin. After a phone call to Ralph Casey, and some time elapse, Ralph met them at Langwarrin with a changeover vehicle, the 1956 Ford Mainline ambulance. With the Studebaker now on the back of a tow truck to our museum with Ralph on board, Frank and Neil proceeded to Heyfield. Overall, it was a very successful event at the 80th celebration, attended by current Paramedics, former paramedics, the Heyfield Ambulance Auxiliary, and members of the public. Keen interest surrounded the vintage Ford Mainline ambulance. This vehicle originated from the Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme late 1940s – 1960s. The 80th celebration, unbeknownst at the time of planning, fell on a day that was without electricity to the entire area of Heyfield from 1900hrs to 1600hrs due to maintenance works. After a pleasant and well attended day, Neil and Frank headed for home, but alas at Flynn a tyre on the Ford Mainline blew out and they had to wait on the side of the road for the R.A.C.V. to attend them. A top effort in patience and filling in time for Frank, Neil, and busy time for Ralph responding to their needs so promptly.



**ACO Josh Smith, Patient Rory Smith,
Team Manager Sandra Tozer.**

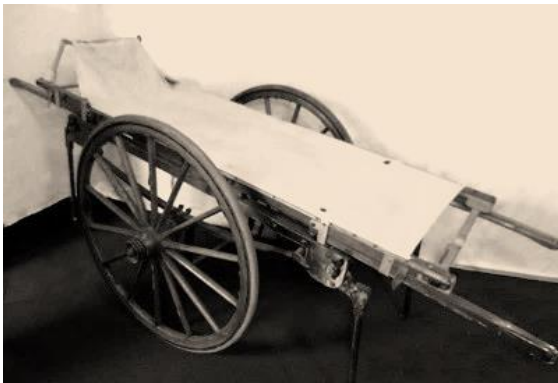


**Team Leader Kim Marchesi,
Team Manager Sandra Tozer.**

At the Beginning

In the 1880s and prior to, if a person had the misfortune to have an accident or be seriously ill there was little or no assistance available to them. At times when patients were in this serious or critical condition, a door would act as a stretcher, often pulled off a building. St John Ambulance had commenced first aid and nursing training in 1883 although this was very limited in trained numbers. In most cases the injured and sick were bundled into Hansom cabs (horse drawn coaches) and taken to hospital, often the victim, if able, had to pay the fare. One can imagine the exacerbated injury this handling caused, a fractured femur became a “compound” fracture, a cervical spine victim a paraplegic, or the patient deceased. This terrible state of affairs continued in Melbourne and gained the attention of a number of medical practitioners. This was a gradual turning point to put in place ambulance assistance for the sick and injured

In 1887, six Ashford Litters were donated to the cause and so created a vision which lead to the eventual commencement of Ambulance in Victoria. Urgent funding for this initiative from the State Government or Melbourne Council was denied. This resulted in the Ashford Litters being placed at Victoria Police or Fire Brigade premises (MFB). In the case of requirement, Police constables or Firemen would attend a call with the Ashford Litter. Neither service personnel had any first aid training, so the same misfortune occurred to patients as in the Hansom Cab situation. This continued until 1899 when a group of influential women raised and donated a sum of money to purchase a horse drawn ambulance. The Ashford Litter remained in service with the horse drawn ambulance until the first motor vehicle ambulance began service in 1910. This motor vehicle was an imported 10 H.P. Renault chassis and engine, built into an ambulance by local coach makers. The motor ambulances grew in numbers; however this did not immediately end the era of the horse drawn ambulance, they continued together until the horse drawn units were phased out in 1926.



More About Us

Our Chas Martin OAM Ambulance Victoria Museum is a great place for both retired men and women from all walks of life to come to and fill in a few hours when desired. We have a terrific group of friendly volunteers, basically all retirees that do a range of interesting and light work. There is no necessity for volunteers to be former ambulance personnel, our museum has been developed for the people of Victoria. Once people come along and join our group they become part of, and treated as, ambulance personnel.

Those who have joined us seem to want to stay, many have been onboard since the beginning of our Ambulance Museum almost 20 years ago. The tasks vary from sitting down having a chat and a cup of tea or coffee, to filing, computer logging of our historic items, workshop, entertaining group visits, assisting with sourcing our state ambulance history for The Beacon, and much more. Some voluntary tasks can be carried out remote from our museum by electronic communication, as is The Beacon produced. **Interested?** Please Email ambulance.historical@outlook.com or phone 0419 619 430 You will be so pleased you did!

Ambulance Victoria Lead the Way Again

Go anywhere snow rescue vehicles set a new dimension on the mountains

If you were a skier on our Victorian Alps around 40 years ago and sustaining serious or critical injury from a skiing accident, you may have been in a precarious, or even a life threatening situation. Medical assistance and rescue on the slopes was carried out by ski patrols, and removal then with a 4WD ambulance, providing this vehicle could get to the accident site. This was courageous and admirable work carried out in extreme weather conditions and rough terrain by these committed ski patrol crews.

In the mid to late 1980s, at Falls Creek, a toboggan (Skidoo) and covered sled were introduced, however problems were encountered with the toboggan operation due to exhaust fumes entering the sled with the patient. The other two ski resorts had employed different methods of skiing accident retrieval.

The mountains have always presented rescue problem resourcing over the years with patient evacuation not only due to the terrain, but also the consistently changing weather patterns. This creates a major problem when considering helicopter (HEMS) retrieval and patient transfers. Subsequently, there has been priority investigation into an additional and more versatile snow ambulance that could be deployed in these snowbound and harsh terrain situations.

As a result of Ambulance Victoria's credible investigation and resourcing, snow-goers heading to Victoria's high country this winter will be treated to smoother and quicker transport in the event of an emergency, with new snow ambulances hitting the snow slopes.

Ambulance Victoria (AV) has welcomed four vehicles to its growing fleet in recent weeks, bolstering its specialist emergency alpine response in time for this year's ski season.

The new wheels have already been busy at Mount Hotham and Falls Creek, with a Can-Am Defender and Skidoo stationed at both sites.

Specifically designed for snow conditions, the Can-Am Defender is a side-by-side over-snow vehicle which has been purpose-built to manoeuvre Victoria's hazardous mountainous conditions.

Ambulance Victoria Hume Region Area Manager **Rob Heaslip**, who helped with the design, said early reports were that the vehicles had received a warm welcome.

"The snow vehicles are already having a significant and positive impact to our Alpine resort communities, by reducing transport time, patient exposure to the elements, and reliance on other agencies," Mr Heaslip said.

"We anticipate that with the vehicles improving our ability to access patients in challenging snow locations, it will also improve our response times to snow bound locations, particularly cases overnight."

He said the Can-Am Defender allows paramedics to manage patients in a sheltered environment similar to a miniature ambulance.

"Our crews can now access patients directly at their lodges or other snow-locked areas with a full suite of equipment and manual handling tools, helping with ease of access when it matters most," he said.

The Can-Am Defender has a custom manufactured pod and is capable of loading patients flat for transport along the slopes. Its legs can drive over snow and ice, meaning it can travel to patients that can't be accessed by a regular ambulance.

The Skidoo has a large capacity to carry equipment and can quickly access steeper terrain away from formed tracks. This vehicle is also available for our specialist wilderness response paramedics to access patients outside of a ski resort.

Before these new vehicles, both patients and paramedics were often exposed to the elements, which is obviously another challenging dynamic in an emergency.

Now patients can be effectively treated and stabilised while being accommodated in an enclosed stretcher."

The four extra snow vehicles have been added to AV's alpine resources following the successful introduction of the Can-Am over-snow ambulance last year.

The good news is set to continue in 2024, with Ambulance Victoria looking to add more snow vehicles at Mount Buller in time for next year's snow season.



Contingent of Snow Rescue Vehicles.



Can-Am Defender (Snow Spider) and Skidoo



Male and Female crew at the ready to rescue.



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