

The Early Days of Ambulance Services in Albury

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The first proposal to form an Albury branch of St John's Ambulance came in June 1907 from Frank Shepard, a brewer with Albury Brewing Company.

The first ambulance litter for transporting patients was purchased in December 1907, cost £10. It was not long before complaints that the ride on steel tyres was too rough for patients and rubber tyres were needed.

A second litter, purchased for £36, arrived in June 1909 – both litters had to be purchased from public subscriptions.



A NSW Ambulance litter from 1911

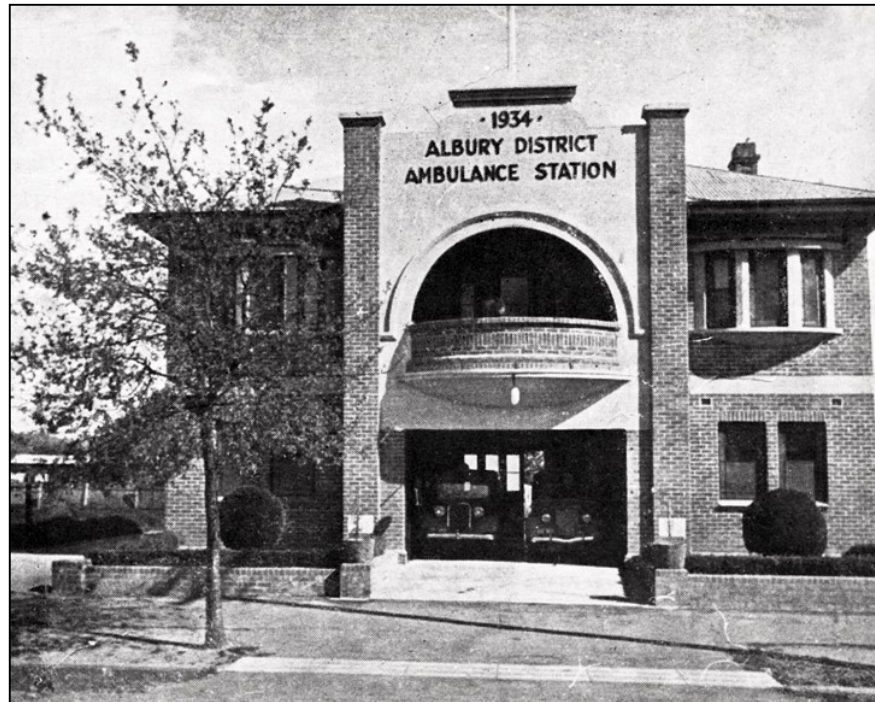
The second litter was described in the *Border Morning Mail* "constructed of spotted gum neatly varnished, sail canvas, and iron fittings. It is 6ft 8in long and 22 inches wide. The height of arch-caved canvas at the head of the litter is 22in and at the foot 15in. At the head there is on either side an opening flap of canvas for ventilation. There are four handles and four legs. The springs are light and the wheels ordinary small sulky wheels, which are to be rubber tyred."

Mr Shepard proposed the purchase of a 'horse ambulance' in 1908, but the hand drawn litters were still being used several years later. In June 1911 the *BMM* reported "the disorderly state in which the litter had been returned after use ... many people who used it had done so without permission ... someone should be responsible for its proper keeping ... it should be fumigated after use and there should be a covering over the canvas to keep blood off it ... instructions for the use of the litter and the method of handling patients should be given on a notice board, and placed at the shed where the litter is stored."

In July 1919 a motion was carried by the Albury Municipal Council that "surplus be set aside as the nucleus of a fund for procuring a motor ambulance."

It was not until March 1927 that a meeting was held to formally establish “an ambulance transport service for Albury and district” and the town’s first motor ambulance arrived, “an old model Dodge” costing £100.

Several temporary ambulance station sites were used. Proposed permanent sites were the north-east corner of Billson Park and next to the CWA in Kiewa St. In 1934 a site on the north-east corner of Albury Hospital grounds became available.



Two ambulance vehicles parked in the Dean St Ambulance Station, the one on the right possible being the Buick purchased in 1939 for £619

The building was designed by Louis Harrison with a prominent curved balcony in the ‘Federation Art Nouveau’ style. Mayor Alf Waugh laid the foundation stone in August 1934 and Mrs Waugh opened the station in December. The original building provided ground floor access to Dean St for two vehicles.