

Cooneana Heritage Centre Newsletter



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Ipswich Historical Society



Newsletter 1 – February 2026 (*Published Monthly*)

*Welcome to our first Newsletter for 2026! Sincere thanks to Maxine Jones for all of her hard work with newsletters in the past - I only hope that I can do the job justice. We hope that you find something of interest here. Contributions are **most welcome** – this is a great forum to promote your group and ensure that your activities reach a wide audience. (Contact details for contributions can be found on the last page).*

Spotlight on a Member

This month we present the memoirs of Hugh Taylor – President, Ipswich Historical Society inc.

24 January 2026

My involvement with the Ipswich Historical Society commenced after the Society located itself at Cooneana on Redbank Plains Road, New Chum; around 2000.

Cooneana was a large selection of land taken up in the 1860's by Samuel Welsby and family and by the 1880's it was known as the Cooneana Coal Estate. Rhondda Collieries established itself on the Estate in the 1880's but closed until the Redbank Bundamba Rail Loop was built in early 1900's. Rhondda reopened in 1900 and over many years purchased a large part of the Estate for mining Coal. Rhondda purchased the Cooneana Homestead Property by mid-1970's.

In 1976 Rhondda Collieries built their Main Office and Administration building on the Cooneana Homestead Site. In 1996 Rhondda Collieries closed its mining operations.

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I commenced work as a Cadet Mine Surveyor for Rhondda Collieries in 1968 and have worked out of the Rhondda Administration building since it was built. After the closure of operations, I remained in contact with the site as caretaker and commenced my own business, Taylor Mining Services Pty Ltd, using part of the Main building for my office.

I was always interested in History and hence it seemed a logical and easy step for me to become a member of the Ipswich Historical Society, which I did in 2003. As I seemed to be mostly on site, I often found myself attending to visitors looking for the Society etc. Hence, I suggested to the Society that I become a Vice President so that I could act and assist such visitors in a capacity of authority for the Society. This was approved and I assisted when necessary.

A lot has been said about the main large table that the Society meets around. This was the Board Room Table that the directors of Rhondda Collieries met around, Even Alan Bond has attended meetings around this Table. After the company closed its operations in Ipswich and before the building was officially sold to the Ipswich City Council, a company operating out of the old Box Flat Extended Collieries offices at Swanbank purchased the Table and installed it as their board room table. Some years passed and the company sold the Box Flat buildings to Swanbank Power Station. I was fortunate to meet up with the company director immediately prior to the sale of the office furniture and when I enquired as to what was planned for the Table. After a short pause, he mentioned that if I could get it out of there quickly “I could have it”. After summoning a favour from an associate, we managed to bring the Table back to where it belonged In the Main Building. The original red chairs were also part of the deal and are still around the table today.

I became the acting President of the Society after the sudden resignation of the long-standing President Mr Ian Wilson in December 2013 and officially, President after a Special General Meeting in March 2014. I would like to thank Ian for his long-standing service and attention to the development of the Cooneana Heritage

Terrific Tree of the Month

Bunya Pine (*Araucaria Bidwillii*)
Court Street, Ipswich Hospital campus

This tree, located within the grounds of the former medical superintendent’s residence at the hospital, stands as a testament to the very earliest years of medical care in Ipswich. It is believed that this Bunya Pine was one of a number of trees donated by the Brisbane Botanical Gardens in 1867 to the fledgling hospital, only eight years after Queensland became a state, and seven years after the first medical patient was admitted to the hospital in 1860.

With a number of significant trees removed in 2025 to make way for building expansion, it is now the lone surviving mature planting on the hospital site, having survived generations of changes on campus.



Currently there are no protections in place, but steps have recently been taken in an attempt to ensure its preservation of the tree for future generations.

It is estimated that just 0.2% of all trees in Ipswich are pines (all species).
(Source: Ipswich Insider)

Centre and the preservation of Ipswich Heritage. His extensive work in conjunction with Mr Barry Wade and Society members, guided the Society and left the Society with a great legacy and a large part of the tremendous facilities the Society enjoys today.

I am, and have been, very pleased to see how well the Society and the Cooneana Heritage Centre has continued to grow and develop. Some of the highlights have been the inclusion, development and Association with -

- Ipswich Historical Society Volunteers
- Conservation of Cooneana House and Rhondda Administration Building & Carport
- Ipswich Genealogical Society and Brigg House
- Brighton House with the Spinners Weavers Fibre Artisans
- Annexes onto Sheds 1 & 2, Special thanks to Hutchinson Builders
- The Blacksmith Shop and displays
- Retired Coal Miners Group with Displays, Memorial Services, and Industry employee records
- Association with Heritage Bus Association
- Association with Qld Metal Artisans Collective
- Association with Queensland Pioneer Steam Railway
- Association and relationship with Ipswich City Council, incl Mayor, Councillors & Employees

For the Society to function it relies on a number of volunteers to manage many programs that include everything from ground and facilities maintenance, accepting and accessioning donations, preparing displays, record keeping, advertising and promotion, research, information technology maintenance, financial and secretarial duties, holding open day events etc A look at our members meeting agenda provides an insight into the number of duties and functions necessary for our Society to continue doing what we are passionate about.

With the vital and extensive assistance, I receive from the Executive and Members of the Society it is a pleasure to be a part of, as we try to meet the Society aims and goals in the preservation of Our Ipswich History and Heritage.



Hugh Taylor

President, Ipswich Historical Society inc.

Our First Event for 2026

This year, 2026, the Ipswich Historical Society will be holding our most popular events once more.

These events will succeed with the support of various organizations whose interests align with the event and of course with our volunteers giving a few hours of their time to help out.

The first will be the Bush Poets Breakfast on **Saturday 21 March** from 9am to 12 noon.

We anticipate serving breakfast – egg, bacon, toast, sauces, tea, coffee and juice – from 9am. The poetry will begin at 10am and finish at about noon. Attendees who want breakfast will pay \$20 and provide their ticket for a plate. The \$20 will cover the meal, the poetry and the opportunity to see new exhibits and visit the various groups on site from 12 noon until 2pm.

Those who do not want breakfast will pay \$10 for the poetry and site visit.

Associated groups at Cooneana may choose not to open before 12 noon, to allow members to attend the poetry recitals.

Cooks and volunteers will have breakfast at a reserved table when they are able.

Don't forget you can also recite your own bush poetry, or a favourite poem from a published author if you wish.

Many thanks,

Sandi Jones

E: events@ipswichhistoricalsociety.com

The Queensland Heritage Experience 2026

Overview

In 2026, the Queensland Pioneer Steam Railway (QPSR), the Heritage Bus Association (HBA), and the Ipswich Historical Society (IHSi) will collaborate to deliver a series of combined Heritage Experiences. These events are mostly scheduled for the second Saturday of each month, running from March to November, except for October.

Full details will be provided in the March Newsletter. It is anticipated that the first of these experiences will be held on **Saturday March 14**



Historical Building of the Month

House on Denmark Hill



This recently unearthed photograph of a property on Denmark Hill shows a house with a front gable and uncommon and very steep 70° roof pitch.

Close inspection of the photograph reveals that the house has a bay window on the left side, an attic and that it once had a chimney. According to the current owner of the property, the house dates from the 1860s or 1870s and was extensively renovated by the owner's father around 1960. At that time, the entire roof was replaced with a low pitch roof, the bay window replaced with a modern window, and the building was re-skinned with modern narrow boards. The open verandah on the right side of the structure was enclosed.

As a result, the current building outwardly presents as a modern structure from the 1960s era, with only one external wall hinting at its early history. Internally, many of the features of the original building remain intact, including a fireplace, French doors and a traditional floorplan.

If the date of construction is correct, this house represents one of the very earliest timber buildings that still remains in Ipswich, though of course in a very altered form. More research on the site might reveal some surprising results.

That 'you cannot judge a book by its cover' is certainly true of this property.
(Location withheld on request)

SAVE THE DATE IN 2026

The Queensland Heritage Experience
Saturday 14 March (tentative date)

Bush Poets Breakfast - Saturday 21
March 9am – 12 noon

Ipswich Show - Friday 15 to Sunday 17
May at the Showgrounds

Biggest Morning Tea - Saturday 30
May at Cooneana 11am – 1pm

Horses to Horsepower – Sunday 28
June at Cooneana 9am to 2pm

Box Flat Memorial Service – 10am
Friday 31 July at Swanbank Memorial

Cooneana After Dark – Friday 11
September 6pm to 9pm

Cooneana Market – Saturday 17
October 9am - 1pm

Volunteers Thank You Evening –
Friday 20 November

St Barbara's Day service – 10am
Friday 4 December at Limestone Park

The story behind the Wire Frame Horse



Around early November 2024 the Cooneana Historical Society Executive mentioned, at a general meeting, an idea they had to ask me to fabricate a horse. They made an innocent request that, as a Blacksmith, “could I make a Horse?”. “What” I said, “a horse”, thinking the request was a small wall display. But when questioned further, “no, a life size horse”. A bit taken aback I advised that I would have to think about it for a while. And so, the seed was planted.

As there were a number of horse-drawn vehicles, under the custodianship of the Society, it was felt that a Horse between the shafts of one of them would enhance the display, especially when an open day to the public was undertaken.

Could I do such an undertaking, and what form should it take? I commenced researching artistic steel fabricated animals to develop some ideas and try to comfort myself that I could indeed build it.

Three build styles seemed possible:

- Solid steel plate, bent and welded,
- Junk Yard steel brought together in the form required; or
- Wire frame construct.

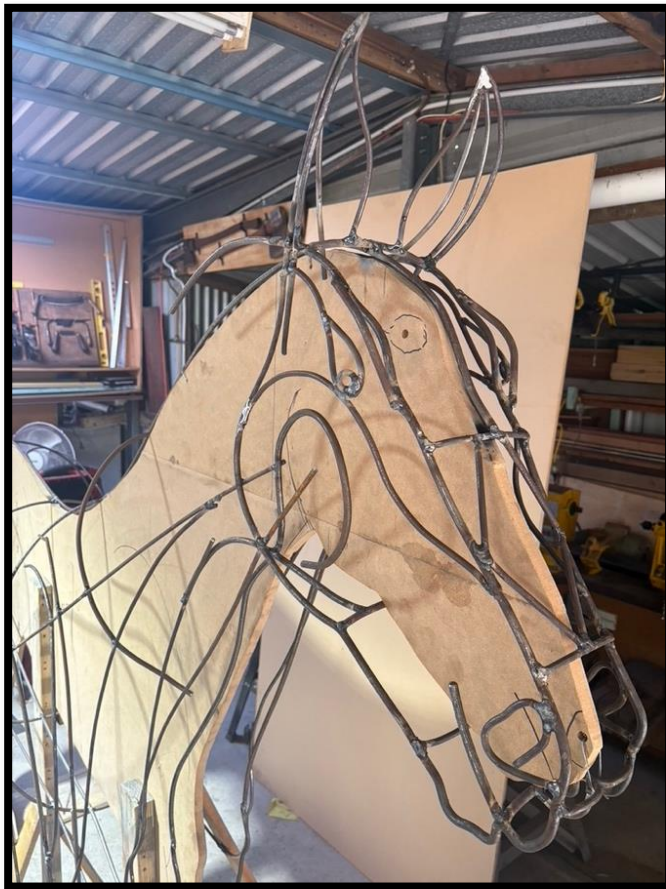
So, I developed these three themes and made the ‘Death’ by Power Point presentation, presented to the Executive on 19Nov24. That certainly stirred some excitement and an agreement to commence the project of building a full-size wire frame horse began.

During Dec24 I made a life size profile template from MDF fibre board and braced it to have it stand upright. From there I was able to lay steel bar across the spine and under the belly to commence bending and shaping the profile. Material size was generally 8mm and 10mm round bar. Then oval sections, giving depth to the structure, were added.

Finally, a ‘filling in’ process intensifying the visual aspect of the animal was done. The head was done separately. It was more intricate and required heating the bar to bend



at a tighter radius. Ears, eyes, nostrils and mouth were heated, shaped and then welded into place and then finally the head was mounted to the main structure. It actually started to look like a Horse and I was much relieved.



More bar was added to the structure, which required sliding it into the form, ascertaining where the bend should be made, removing it and bending only to do the same thing a number of times till the desired outcome was achieved. Slow and laborious to say the least. The legs would have to support the structure and were therefore intensified in their build, and to make things harder I created a front leg as though the animal was taking a step, creating movement. Mane and Tail welded in towards the end of the build.

The structure had to be mobile. Therefore, a sled with wheels was designed. The horse can now, quite easily, be relocated anywhere within the Cooneana grounds.

Now what's in a Name? I proposed the name for the wire frame Horse as

'Banjo'. A sentimental story follows. My Grandfather fought in the Great War in Palestine. He was in the 4th Light Horse. Banjo Patterson, our great celebrated poet, was a War Correspondent in the Middle East during that time and he and my Grandfather became good friends. On my Grandfather's return, and taking up a Soldier's Settlers block at Binya, NSW, his saddle ponies were always called 'Banjo' in recognition of that friendship.

Finally, on the 15Mar25 a grand opening/presentation of the Horse to the Historical Society was undertaken. An extremely pleasing day.

I hope you all enjoy this short story, but better still come and see 'Banjo' a most pleasing Project.

Regards - Ned Kelly

(Blacksmith and Project builder)



The name plate now attached to the Horse's neck



Hugh Taylor IHS President and myself on the presentation day.

Guess the Mystery Objects

What am I?

Try to guess without referring to online sources.



Object 1



Object 2

(Answer next month)

What!! You Collect Bricks?

By Alister Cameron

What's so interesting about bricks? Not much until you start to look into their history: where they were found and who made them.

In our Ipswich region most of our older houses are made of timber. But even so, there are often a few spare bricks hanging around. Whether they were used in conjunction with a copper or fireplace; or imported for a path or driveway; we come across them. Frequently they have writing on them. What does this writing refer to?

There are two brick types, in particular, that seem to generate the most interest. The first are bricks with the inscription: "IPSWICH" on them. These were made by Alfred Donnelly in the late 1800s in Queens Park. The other type is the "BUNDANBA" bricks, also hailing from the late 1800s. The unusual spelling reflects an era when the format of the suburb's name was yet to be standardized.

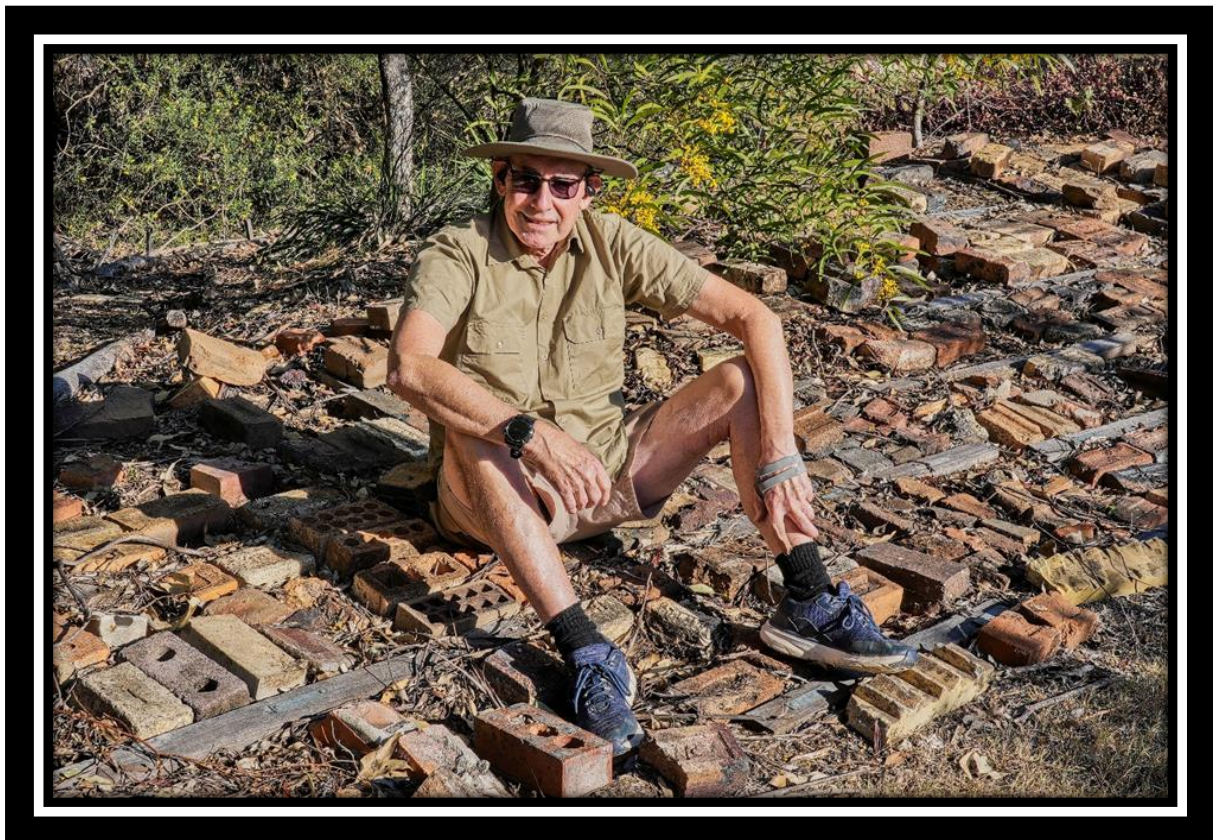


My interest in bricks started really by accident. You see, for a long time I've had the hobby of tracking down where railways used to run, mapping them, photographing the sites, and comparing those photos with scenes from their heydays (see my website: www.railxarchaeologyipswichqld.com). When I came to the Ipswich region over 20 years ago my interests expanded to the mines with which the sidings and tramways were so often associated. And when it came to what was left behind, it was often bricks that remained after much else had gone. So, my brick collection grew along with my railway artifacts.

When I decided to join the Ipswich Historical Society just a few years ago I was introduced to their extensive brick collection. This had been set up expertly by well-known local brick expert Dave Horrigan who had then moved on to other things. With no one looking after the collection at the time I was invited to take charge. As a consequence, I became the "Curator of Bricks" for the Society.

Having said all that, the collection has more than just bricks. It includes pottery items of all kinds; some of which are in with the bricks, and others of a more delicate kind, are in The Society's main collection.

My Brickworks and Potteries website is at <https://brickworksandpotteriesipswichqld.com/>



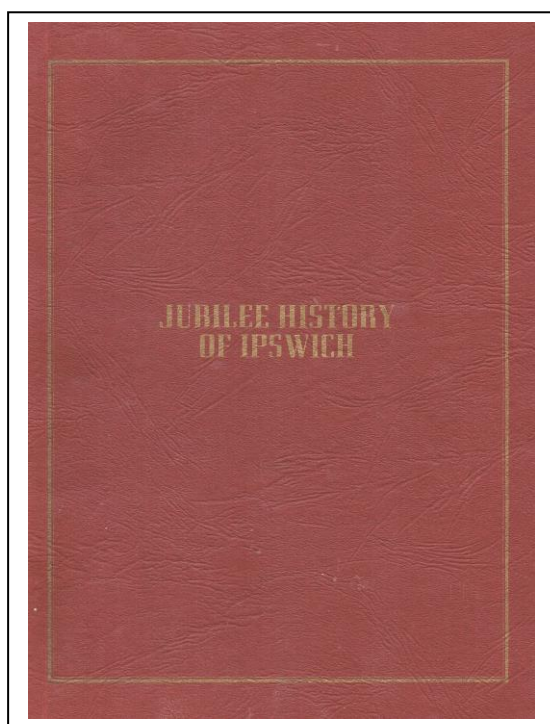
Me and my brick collection at home

Ipswich in Print

This is the first in a series highlighting publications (books and brochures) with a focus on Ipswich. Over the years, everything from schools, churches, the Bremer River, coal mining, sketch books, the hospital, families and wildlife have been the subjects chosen by authors, among other topics.

Some of these publications can still be easily found from time to time at online auctions, but many can also be found at Cooneana's reference library, in the Viva Cribb Local History room at Ipswich Library or at other specialist venues with an interest in the local community. The works highlighted in this section are all from the editor's personal library, gathered over many years.

<i>Title</i>	Jubilee History of Ipswich
<i>Author</i>	George Harrison (editor)
<i>Publisher</i>	H.J. Diddams & Co.
<i>Date of Publication</i>	1910 (Reprinted 1980, 1987, 1991)
<i>Number of Pages</i>	160



There's nowhere better to start this series than with the *Jubilee History of Ipswich*, widely available today despite its initial publication date 116 years ago, thanks to a series of reprints.

The focus of the publication was to explore the town's fifty-year history as it was when first distributed. Early chapters briefly cover exploration and early settlement of Ipswich, before turning to the municipal history of the town. Other chapters look at the development of the railways and water supply, before delving into important on primary industries, business representatives in the

town, churches, schools and the hospital.

There are lots of contemporary illustrations to accompany the text. Reprint copies are currently available from Cooneana.

Out and About at Cooneana



Members, locals and international visitors sharing our facilities at Cooneana



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Opening Hours: Thursdays, Fridays & Saturdays 10.00am-2.00pm

Membership: Please visit our website or contact one of our friendly volunteers for details

Contributions to the newsletter are most welcome.

Please contact the editor: cooneanaeditor@outlook.com