

# Cooneana Heritage Centre Newsletter



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Newsletter 3 – April 2026 (*Published Monthly*)

## Tribute to Lifetime Member and Ipswich Historical Society Benefactor – Helene Hughes

*This month we look briefly at part of the legacy of one of our Life Members at Cooneana. [Contributed by Janine Kirby]*

I would like to pay tribute to our Life Member and Benefactor – Helene Hughes, who has a very long history with Ipswich. Her great grandfather Walter Craies was the first Manager of the Australasian Bank in Ipswich and original owner of *Rockton*, one of the oldest surviving houses in Ipswich, built in 1855.

Both Helene's father John Craies and her uncle William Alexander Craies (known as Alex) fought at Gallipoli in WW1 and then went on to France. Unfortunately, only John returned to Australia as Alex was killed on ANZAC day 25th April 1918.

Major Alex Craies' bravery and dedication to his troops of the 52nd Battalion is a sad story that should be told.

The following are copies of the letters that were sent to Alex's father William from Lieu Robert Dickson Acting OC of "B" Company and Lt Col JL Whitlam.

He was buried the next day, 26th April 1918 close to the battle site. The burial was attended by Lt Col Whitlam, Major RF Fitzgerald, Lieu R Dickson, the Platoon Commander and Piper Major R Whyte with Chaplain Rev D B Blackwood conducting the Service. The photo of the burial was taken by Captain C E Bean – A.I.F. Official War Correspondent.

Alex is the most senior Australian Soldier to be buried in Villers-Bretonneux.

## *What's Inside*

Tribute to H. Hughes.....	1
Bush Poets Breakfast.....	4
Tree of the Month .....	5
QMAC Report.....	6
Blacksmith's Forge (pt.2)...	7
Life Member: SWFAI.....	9
Building of the Month....	10
What am I?.....	11
Save the Date.....	11
Book of the Month.....	11
Out and About.....	12
Membership & Contact....	12

**In the Field**

**24th May 1918.**

*Dear General Birdwood,*

*In reply to your request for available details of the death of Major W. A. CRAIES. I very much regret the delay of three days since your letter was received.*

*Major CRAIES was in command of "B" Coy, 52nd Battalion, and held that appointment since August last year, with the exception of about six weeks (February – March & April) when a senior Company Commander (Captain A. H. Fraser) returned to regimental duty, Craies acted temporarily as second-in-command, but resumed command on afternoon of 5th April when Captain Fraser became a casualty and prisoner of war. The men of the Company had therefore come to regard him as their real chief and there is no doubt that he possessed their confidence in a very marked degree. He was without doubt one of the finest officers the 52nd Battalion ever had on its roll, and, as you know Sir, I reposed the greatest trust in him.*

*For the counter-attack near VILLERS-BRETONNEUX on night 24/25 April my battalion had three companies forming the leading waves and "B" Company followed in support. By the time the objectives were reached Major CRAIES was the sole remaining Company Commander and he practically took command of all four companies who were then together in the front line and naturally were very much mixed. The fact that before daylight the position gained in the successful drive back of the Germans to MONUMENT WOOD, had been well consolidated and the companies fairly well re-organized, was due almost solely to the fine leadership and skill of Major CRAIES.*



*For a couple of hours that night until it was possible to establish regular communication with the leading troops he carried on, on his own and I was thoroughly satisfied with the dispositions he made of the companies is the consolidation. He sent me a personal message by the Intelligence Office at about 2a.m. on the 25th, especially requesting that I would not come forward from our temporary battalion headquarters in the forward edge of the CACHY SWITCH as he had the situation well in hand and that it would be foolish to take unnecessary risks. I mention this incident as showing the solicitous care which was a feature of his dealings with others. – He personally took numberless risks. Throughout the whole of the 25th April he kept me constantly informed of the situation and I am certain that to do*

*this he frequently left his company trenches and posts to satisfy himself regarding the safety of other portions of the line, and this was all done under enemy machine gun fire and enemy snipers were particularly active.*

*Late in the evening – just before dusk set in on the 25th April he was mortally wounded in the stomach by a bullet from an enemy sniper: the stretcher bearers attended to him at once and he was carried out as soon as it was possible to move after dark: he died unfortunately before reaching the advanced dressing station. After our relief, early on the 26th, we had the*

body carried back with us to the reserve position in the *BLANGY-NICHOLAS* line and that afternoon we buried him in a newly opened cemetery by the roadside: *AMIENS VILLERS BRETONNEUX ROAD*. Map reference of grave is: Sheet 62d. sq. O. 29. C.2.8. Chaplin D.B. Blackwood conducted the service, and a small party of his own Company were present.

*I am Sir, Yours Sincerely*

*J. L. Whittlam.*



Rough Key Photo (taken by Captain C.E. Bean - A.I.F. Official War Correspondent)  
Of the Burial of Major W.A. Craies of "B" Company 52<sup>nd</sup> A.I.F. at 4.30 pm 26<sup>th</sup> April 1918

**France**

**15/05/18**

*(Extract) I was pleased to get your letter and believe me anything I can tell you that will help to bear your grief will be a pleasure to me.*

*You doubtless read in the papers that on the 25th April the Germans slightly bent our line a *VILLERS-BRETONNEUX*, AND THAT IT WAS RECAPTURED THE FOLLOWING NIGHT. It was this Bn. Which, in conjunction with another Australian Bn. Made the rather brilliant counter-attack which caused the recapture of the Village and prevented the Hun hopping it to Amiens.*

*The 52nd hopped the Bags with Major Craies in charge of the Bn. Front line. The stunt was difficult, - pitch dark over ground we had never seen and had no chance of reconnoitring.*

*All agree that it was Craies' skill and coolness which made the Bn. Part of the show so successful, the whole tactical handling of the situation fell on his shoulders and he bore it with his usual cool courage and skill, made order out of chaos and generally saw the whole thing through as only an able and clever leader could.*

*The last tribute to him is the feeling of loss in all the men in his company, who realise they have lost the finest Company Commander they ever had, and believe me he set the men an example which anyone might find hard to follow.*

*He continued operations until the night of the 25th and was sniped in the treacherous twilight while running from the line to the support Coy. Command.*

*Yours sincerely,*

*Robert Dickson O/C*

## Bush Poets Breakfast a Success

On Saturday 21 March we held our third Bush Poets Breakfast. This year included music and songs by the Jacaranda Jam Community Musicians that added tremendously to the atmosphere during breakfast. Some will be coming back again to do a tour.



There were some walk-ins who wanted to enjoy breakfast along with those who had booked' and our volunteers. We also offered a snack after the poetry that went down well.

Unfortunately, the Toowoomba Bush Poets were unable to attend, as several were unwell. However, the Logan Performance Bush Poets and Mike Gilmour from the North Pines Bush Poets did us proud. I wish to thank Gerry Mannion, from Logan, for arranging for all the poets to come along.

Also, I would like to thank and congratulate all the volunteers who helped set up, cook, serve food and clean up afterwards for their sterling support of this event.

Without all of you, we would be unable to hold these events. Great Stuff!



Sandi Jones

## *Terrific Tree of the Month*

### **Yellow Poinciana** (*Peltophorum pterocarpum*)

*University of Southern Queensland campus, Ipswich*

The yellow poinciana is perhaps not as well-known as the spectacular red-flowered poinciana that we are all familiar with here in Ipswich (which is unrelated, despite the similarities in their common names), but the tree is no less striking when in full bloom. A native of southern Asia and tropical Australia, the tree brings a significant shot of colour into the environment.

Also known as the Yellow Flame Tree, it has fern-like leaves and of course bright yellow flowers. Generally, it grows to around 10m in height. The example on the University campus is likely fully mature. Certainly not commonly seen in the Ipswich area, it is more at home in more northerly climates such as Darwin, as well as Malaysia and Indonesia, so to have an example locally is quite a treat, especially when in bloom.



Apparently, it is a superb tree for attracting pollinators such as butterflies and bees. Whilst mostly considered an ornamental tree, on the island of Java the bark is used to make a brown dye for batik colouring.

It is one of a number of significant trees that stand in the grounds of the University of Southern Queensland campus in Ipswich. Others will be highlighted in future editions.



March has seen a welcome cooling off in the evenings, our blacksmiths, knifemakers and project builders have been out in force taking advantage of the lower humidity and temperatures.

We've recently taken delivery of a crusher for coke, the fuel of choice for blacksmithing. It's very capable and a trial run of some concrete slab was quickly reduced to roading materials. There are a few guards to make and fit before we can safely use it but we are very happy with the machine and its capability.

Many of the members make knives almost exclusively, often from recycled materials. Car springs, bearing races, farriers rasps, files, saw blades, lawn mower blades, all can contain enough carbon to allow successful heat treatment, which allows the item to be hard, tough and retain an edge. Often, it's the tell-tale signs left on the blade of the original of the material that gives the knife some interesting features and desirability. There is unpredictability in using recycled items or materials, but as the Manfred Mann song lyrics say, "but Mama, that's where the fun is".

We're open on Wednesday nights from around 5.30 pm for anyone to come along and have a try. Just turn up and somebody will help you get started, give advice and assistance, and hopefully you'll take home your very own handcrafted tool, knife or keepsake.



Find us on the web at [qmac.club](http://qmac.club)

Or look for us in the back corner of the IHS site.

## Cooneana's Blacksmith's Traveling Forge



### (Part 2)

Early in 2018 an old horse drawn dray was recovered from the outer boundary of the Cooneana Heritage precinct and carefully rolled into a corner of the Blacksmith's Shop. The Dray was in such poor condition it virtually collapsed, and any thought of restoration was considered futile.



*Not enough wood left for an Ausie BBQ*

However, consideration was given to restore half the dray, separating it along its centre line to show the general public what it used to be and what it could be. We soon determined that an undertaking such as this would be impossible, as structurally; there was not enough to support a refurbished half.

In early 2019 I decided to utilise the old dray by copying its critical dimensions, decorative pattern, and then use the remaining ironwork build an entirely new Dray. But not a normal Dray. It had to have some relevance to the Blacksmith's Shop. Therefore, a World War One Blacksmith's Traveling Forge was envisaged. In consultation with Jocelyn and Linda Doherty, the old Dray's previous owners, and whose family had donated it to the Historical Society many years ago, agreement was obtained to use the Dray in this way. They were pleased to hear that something was being done with the Dray all be it to consume it into a new article. The build commenced mid-April 2019 with a visit from Roy Clark, a Wheelwright, who advised that the wheels on the old dray still had enough life for their recovery. I delivered the wheels to Roy that week at the Templin Museum, Boonah, for him to commence their refurbishment.

My role for the Traveling Forge was to design and build it. Everything except the wheels. Little remained of the old Dray. I recovered the sad and sorry pieces to my workshop and soon set about measuring and planning for the new Dray's build. The old timber and ironworks were placed out on the ground in their original profile, photographed, measured and then stripped of the remaining ironwork. Bolts, Trace Hooks, rear Gate Hinges, Grab Handles, Foot-Step and Spacer Bars were set aside along with one decorative curl (the opposite side missing), which previously adorned the rear of the Dray.

This was going to be an extensive task. Following approaches to the Australian War Memorial and England's Ministry of Defence (they sent me plans of a horse drawn mobile Forge), seeking plans, pictures and general Blacksmith history during the Great War, I determined that the Blacksmith's Carts, Drays and Wagons all had similar requirements; they had to be mobile and they had to have everything a Blacksmith required to function and it really didn't matter whether the forge was mounted on a Dray, Limber or Wagon. A lot of wagons and drays were requisitioned anyway. The American Civil War also had a great bearing on the Allied Forces designs.

Just to help the reader here:

**A Dray** has two wheels and two shafts to be pulled by a horse or donkey

**A Cart** is a smaller version of a dray

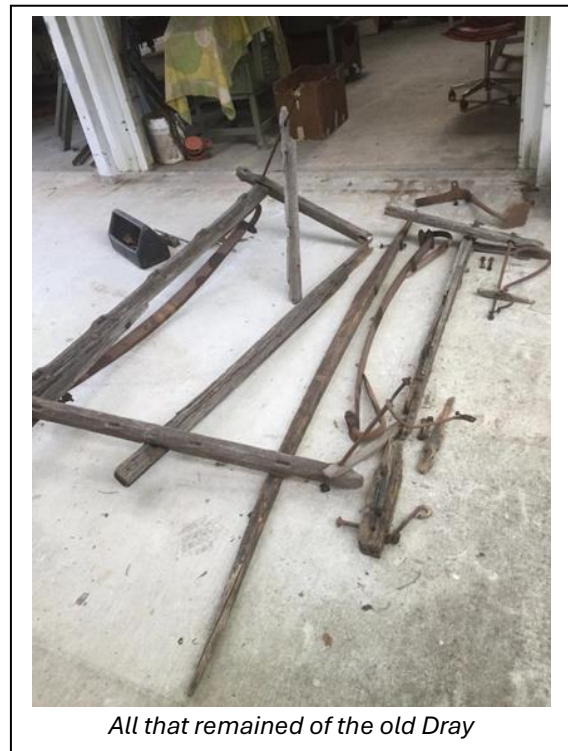
**A Wagon** has four wheels, generally one or no shafts and pulled by more than one animal; and

**A Limber** has two wheels and a solid shaft or towing hitch and is towed behind the above.

After sketching and drawing a number of styles, I decided on a dray that took advantage of the size and construction of the old Dray. To envision what was required for the materials, carpentry work, blacksmithing activity, fabrication and overall construction time, I devised five phases for the Dray's completion:

1. The Wheels;
2. The Chassis;
3. A set of Giant Bellows;
4. The Forge proper; and
5. A Tool Box.

*(Continued Next Edition.....)*



*All that remained of the old Dray*



*Lynda Flewell-Smith is the Founding Member of Ipswich Spinners and Weavers (1977) which has become Spinners, Weavers, Fibre Artisans of Ipswich (2020) when she was awarded Life Membership. Her story in her words:*

I was born at Mutdapilly in 1940. There was petrol rationing at the time, so my Mum stayed in Ipswich until the birth. I attended Normanby State School, then I attended St Peters Lutheran College as a full boarder where I did a Commercial Course. After Junior I obtained office work in Brisbane. I started embroidery and crochet as a 10yr old sitting in front of floor radio and kerosene lights. I met my husband in 1954 when his father was transferred to Harrisville as local Police Sergeant. Ross attended Ipswich Boys Grammar School and worked in Brisbane before joining the Air Force. We married in 1959 and had two daughters.



Ross liked old cars so in 1970 we attended the International Vintage Car Rally in Canberra where we stayed in a beautiful caravan park. I remember one lady did not go with her husband. She sat under a beautiful shade tree spinning. She looked so relaxed I decided one day I would do that. After a long time looking after home and children, I decided to take myself off to NZ for a holiday. Now was the time to buy that spinning wheel. I bought a Wee Peggy.

Once home I set about finding a teacher. I approached my daughters' domestic science teacher who agreed to teach at Adult Education Bremer High School. Nine ladies turned up. After completing the course four of us met at Art Society at Milford Street School.

Spinning was becoming popular and more ladies joined so we decided to form our own club under the Constitution of the Art Society. We left Milford Street to move to Technical College in Ellenborough St. After a short time, we moved to TAFE Bundamba. We have met at church halls and dance halls. Our numbers grew and we enjoyed camps, numerous workshops and special weekend workshops. I often billeted tutors in my primitive home at Pine Mountain.

We purchased 60 acres at Pine Mountain in 1978. There was a very old home that we made liveable while Ross built a new home from stone found on site, and cedar shingles. All built with hand tools and hand turned concrete mixer as there was no power. After Ross retired, we did buy a diesel generator which made life much easier. I worked for the AEO for a number of years. Ross worked on the home and property. I bought four coloured sheep from the breeder Barbara Eagles and two angora goats. All these were shorn with hand shears.

I have enjoyed every minute of spinning, weaving, and natural dyeing. I have met wonderful people and lifelong friends. After 27 years of not having a permanent home, spinners were offered space at the Ipswich Historical Society. We joined as members and have had some great times meeting there. I am happy to say we have our own home now at Brighton House where we have room for a library, equipment and workshop area. How lucky are we?



### **Historical Building of the Month – *Dale Head* – 81 Nicholas Street**



The magnificent colonial home known as *Dale Head* was once located on the western side of Nicholas Street. Not much is known about the original house built on this site in the 1860s, but in 1892 this house was built for the manager of the Queensland National Bank. It was constructed by Henry Wyman.

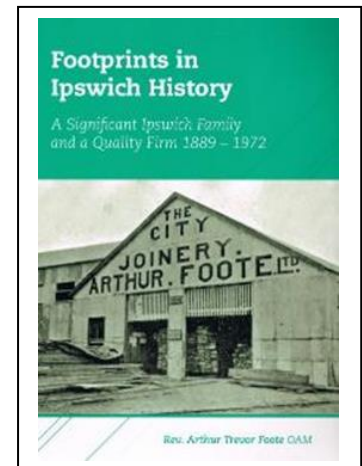
An unusual u-shaped construction with central portico and two wings to either side at the rear, the building included

wooden window shutters to the front rooms and cast-iron lacework both to the balustrades and decorative friezes above. Although cast-iron was not an unheard-of sight on homes in Ipswich, very few homes were built with such attractive friezes in cast iron.

In 1968 the property was purchased by the Lutheran Church for \$12,000. A cottage located next door had also been purchased (currently used as a car park). *Dale Head* was cut up and removed from the site in 1974, and like many other homes in Ipswich, it was lost to the city, being relocated to Moggill.

## Book of the Month

<i>Title</i>	<b>Footprints in Ipswich History</b>
<i>Author</i>	Rev. Arthur Trevor Foote
<i>Publisher</i>	Self-Published
<i>Date of Publication</i>	2013
<i>Number of Pages</i>	118



The subtitle of this publication is 'A Significant Ipswich Family and a Quality Firm 1889-1972' and the cover illustration of the City Joinery hint at the theme of this book. Anyone who has lived in Ipswich, even for a short time, has heard of the Foote family of the famous Cribb & Foote department store, but perhaps less well-known is the timber business established by Arthur Foote. This publication fills that gap admirably.

There are lots of vintage illustrations throughout (I particularly enjoyed the house photos, especially internal shots of the *Baile Mor* house at 100 Chermerside Road). A great addition to our published literature on Ipswich.

Currently available for sale at Cooneana Heritage Centre.

**Mystery Object** What am I? Try to guess without referring to online sources.



This one should be easy to guess!

*Last Month's Object: Joplin Brand No. 6 'Revers-A-Vice', designed to be mounted on the corner of a workbench.*

### Save the Date in 2026

**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**

## Out and About at Cooneana: Bush Poet's Breakfast



### Contact Us - Ipswich Historical Society

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*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](mailto:cooneanaeditor@outlook.com)