



COOROY QLD



Name: MEMORIAL SCHOOL OF ARTS & HALL

Address: ELM STREET, COOROY

The Town:

Cooroy is in south eastern Queensland, located in the northern Sunshine Coast hinterland about 120 kilometres north of the State capital, Brisbane, and about 22 kilometres inland from the coast at Noosa Heads . The population is 3459 (2011 census).

Cooroy's name came from Cooroy Mountain, which was originally called Coorooley, from the Aboriginal word for possum, *kurui*.

The area was explored by timber cutters as early as 1863.

Cooroy railway station was opened in 1891 and in the same year a post office opened. A town survey was conducted in 1907.

Cooroy's main industry developed from timber, having two operating sawmills, into dairying and fruit growing. In 1915, a butter factory opened, which is now operating as an Art and Craft Gallery.

The town was bisected by the Bruce Highway, the major northern route in Queensland until a bypass was built.



Establishment:

The land, (2 roods 2 perches) was reserved for a Recreation and Memorial Hall in 1926. Incorporated in the Memorial Hall is the former School of Arts, originally built for a Shire Hall of the Noosa Council. It had served the community from 1911 with a brief period as a temporary Post Office. With population growth, a larger hall was desired and the building of a Memorial School of Arts was suggested in August 1919. At a Returned Soldiers meeting in March 1921 it was agreed that the park adjoining the School of Arts, a recreation reserve, was the most central and suitable site for the new building.

New by-laws were drafted whereby the Returned Soldiers League was represented on the Park Trust. On 25th April 1925 an Order-in-Council was issued permanently reserving allotments 1 and 2 of section 15, for School of Arts, Recreation and Memorial Hall under the trusteeship of AS Douglas, WR Archdall, GW Edwards, J Fisher and WHG Barnes.



The Building:

This is a sawn timber building with a galvanised iron roof. It is a substantial building with a stage, an entry, and a supper room. The Noosa Shire Council approved the building plans on 20 November 1925, and the dedication service for its completion was conducted by Reverend R. St. George on Sunday, 15 August 1926.

The community wished to build a grand hall to stand as a memorial to their fallen soldiers. The Returned Soldiers and Citizens Committee began fundraising in earnest with various events organised. The local dairy farmers contributed through the Wide Bay Co-operative Dairy Association by a levy of one percent of their cream cheque. The Cooroy Women's Guild, which as the Red Cross had worked tirelessly for the comfort of the soldiers during the War, joined the fundraising efforts with the same commitment.



The hall was completed at a cost of two thousand pounds. Mr. WD Fenwick generously did the architectural work without charge and the contractor, local sawmiller, Mr F Fenwick, ensured that only the very best locally sawn timber was used. It was almost free of debt on opening.

Major Edward Costello, MLA (Country Party Member for Carnarvon) officially opened the building on Friday, 20 August 1926. A war veteran, the Major had served with the 11th Light Horse Regiment. Also present were HF Walker MLA and Noosa Shire Chairman Mr. WI Ferguson. Mr. W R Archdall, President of the Hall Committee introduced Major Costello. The major referred to the patriotism shown by the district during the war and in erecting such a beautiful building in memory of those who had paid the supreme sacrifice. He proceeded to tell how hard it was for the Anzacs to evacuate Gallipoli and leave the little crosses behind glittering in the moonlight. He asked those present to stand while he unveiled the Honour Board and officially opened the building.

The ladies were thanked for their efforts. Major Costello then handed Mrs. Hugh Walker, president of the Women's Guild, the key to the rest room given over to the custody of the Guild, which later became the Country Women's Association. The hall, the interior of which was beautifully decorated in gold and lilac for the ball at night, was then thrown open for public inspection.

With its completion, the citizens of Cooroy and district were justifiably proud of the new Memorial School of Arts and Hall. A concrete porch at the front led to the foyer, which gave entry to the Women's Guild room on the left, the Library on the right and to the main hall. The stage proscenium arch is covered in fine pressed metal. The former School of Arts, moved into position, became the supper room which is the current raised portion of the building. The building was lit by electric light.

In the 1960's, licensed balls became popular and additions, including a bar, were built on the eastern side of the hall, the walls of the supper room removed and the former Women's Guild/CWA room converted to toilets.

By the 1970's, with the opening of the Noosa Drive-in Theatres and the advent of television, there was a decline in social activity. The cinema in the Memorial Hall was forced to close in 1970. Sewerage was connected in 1973 and the committee then faced financial difficulties to raise money for rates and charges to Noosa Shire Council.

Up until 1980, a Mardi Gras and Queen competition, concluding with a ball in the evening, was held to raise funds for the Hall. The Mardi Gras was a highlight of the social calendar. For many years Mrs. Greta Warner, with a small band of helpers, held Hoi afternoons to raise funds for Hall Maintenance.

In 1979, to allow for the building of new Club premises, the reserves on which the Memorial Hall and Club stand were transferred to the trusteeship of the RSL & Citizens Memorial Club. A sub-committee then managed the affairs of the Hall with bookings taken by the Club reception. The Hall was refurbished with a new roof and painted throughout c. 2000.

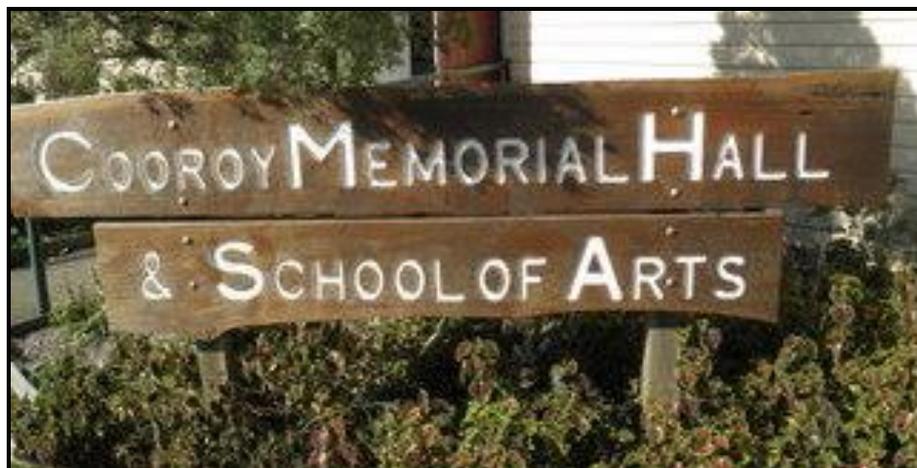


This drawing courtesy of Sunshine Coast Regional Council

Currently (2013):

During its eighty-six years, the Hall has provided a venue for numerous social functions – Balls, the Mardi Gras and Queen competition, Debutante Balls, meetings, church services, classes, indoor bowls and as a polling booth for local and government elections. At present weekly markets are just one of the many activities held in and around the hall and it is rare for it to not be booked by day and night. On New Year's Eve the tunes of the bag-pipers echo across town.

Each year on 25th April, Anzac Day, the community gathers in the Memorial Hall for a solemn service to remember the fallen of all wars in which Australians and New Zealanders have served. From the beginning, the returned soldiers have been involved in community affairs, notably the Memorial Hall where three returned diggers were members of the original building committee. To this day the RSL is responsible for the management of the School of Arts and Memorial Hall for the benefit of the community, and will continue to create a sustainable future for the hall well into the next one hundred years.





Acknowledgements:

Cooroy – Noosa Genealogical & Historical Research Group Inc.

Reference:

Cooroy Memorial School of Arts & Hall: A Brief History by Betty Sutton

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ADFAS Noosa

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