



EUMUNDI QLD



Eumundi School of Arts

Address: Memorial Drive Eumundi Queensland 4562

The Town:

Eumundi is a small country town in the Sunshine Coast hinterland 118 kilometres north of Brisbane. It was established in 1890 and has a population of 1,924 as recorded in the 2011 census. The town name is thought to be derived from *Ngumundi* or *Huomundy*. This is the name of a local Aboriginal warrior said to have adopted escaped convict *Bracefield* as his son in 1831. The area was originally heavily forested and part of the land was occupied by the *Kabi Kabi* Aboriginal people. From the early 1850s, almost all the area in the vicinity of the Eumundi district was part of three cattle runs. However, the dense bush proved to be unsuitable for cattle. By the time the first selectors arrived, the leases of the cattle runs had lapsed and the area was ready for closer settlement. The first selectors to reside permanently in the Eumundi district were Joseph and George Gridley in 1879. A wave of new selectors began to arrive and 47 selections were taken up by 1885. The first road through the district was a dray road, which was marked and cleared immediately after gold was discovered further north at Gympie in 1867.

In 1882 a portion was surveyed for streets and for the sale of blocks of land. This then became the town of Eumundi and lots were first offered for sale in 1890. By 1900, shops started to appear, streets were formed and the town businesses developed.



Soon there were several general stores, a bakery, saddler, blacksmith, butcher shops, auctioneers and agents.

The railway was opened in 1891 so Eumundi, with the railway as well as the road to the north passing through it, developed as an important centre for the timber and dairying industries. As the timber was felled and the land cleared, paspalum and other grasses were planted and dairy farms established. The building of a butter factory in Eumundi indicates the significance of the dairying industry in the 1920s.

Establishment:

In April 1904 the Eumundi and Mt. Cooroy Progress Association was formed, and almost immediately requested that land be set aside by the local government authority for a public hall. This was granted in December, 1904. The Reserve for the School of Arts Hall was officially gazetted in 1905.

Community functions were held in a barn on a property owned by E H Arundell until the first School of Arts Hall was built on the reserve land in 1908, in a style similar to many public buildings built in Eumundi during its early settlement. The Methodist Church, circa 1911, the Church of England, circa 1912, and the Masonic Hall, circa 1923, are all examples of this type of vernacular timber construction. The early 1900s was a boom time for Eumundi with settlers migrating north from the Northern Rivers area of New South Wales to take up the rich grazing and farming land available here. By the time of the 1911 census, the population of the town had risen to 446.



Construction of the first hall circa 1908
Photo courtesy of Eumundi Historical Association (EHA)



The hall soon became too small for the rapidly expanding township. A new hall was proposed by Arthur Cook in 1911 and planning was soon underway. The community responded positively to the need for assistance in building the new hall. Much of the timber was donated by Arthur Cook and the Etheridge family. The latter owned the local sawmill and milled the timber free of charge. Masters of bullock teams donated their services to transport the timber.

From The Nambour Chronicle – 27th July, 1912:

The School of Arts is fast assuming form – the contractor, Mr W Bytheway, has all the framework erected ready for the boarding, and the roof and the building is expected to be finished in six weeks time. The committee are to meet shortly to decide what course should be taken to make the opening worthy of Eumundi and its residents. The total cost of the building is expected to reach £1,000 (pounds).



Circa 1914
Photo courtesy of EHA

The Building:

The wooden structure was two storeys, with a double staircase approach to a small entry verandah covered by a triangular portico. Ornate fretwork adorned the roof peak. The upstairs area was occupied by the main hall and a stage, with rooms on either side of the entrance for storage. The ground floor consisted of a number of rooms: a library, billiard room, reading room and supper room or committee room.

From The Nambour Chronicle – 22nd November, 1912

The building, which was planned by Mr. W. Fenwick of Cooroy, and is to be known, for want of a better name, as the Eumundi School of Arts, is a wooden structure with an iron roof, walls of red weatherboards, oiled and picked out with white.



It overlooks a railway line, from across the road a little way south of the Station, and being backed into the steep hillside, is of considerably higher elevation at the front. It can best be described as a big Hall with stage at the back, and a couple of anterooms at the front, and a supper room under the centre. Under the stage the slope permitted no room. A small kitchen projected from one side of the supper room. The two front rooms are easily entered from the ground and the supper room is up a few steps. The main Hall is approached by two long sets of steps, firmly built "A" fashion in front. There are also steps on the sides and near the stage, and ample provision for escape and ventilation.

The dimensions of the building are Main hall 65' x 40'; walls 18' high with cove ceiling 23' high; stage 40' x 15' elevated about 3'6"; Library and reading room each 18' x 16' and supper room 40' x 18' [' = foot = 30cm]. The whole is lit with acetylene installed by Mr. C. Duffy.

The School of Arts was officially opened on Friday, 15th November, 1912. A street procession along Main Street preceded the opening ceremony. The festivities lasted 2 days. There were stalls of every variety: plain sewing, bachelor's stall, cake stall, sweets, Christmas tree, lucky dip, shooting gallery, produce stall, and a refreshment stall. The two afternoons were taken up with sports and races.

Small changes were constantly being introduced to the hall to encourage more use, some of which were implemented and some were not. The electricity service was available in Eumundi in 1939, however the hall did not have the power connected until 1941.



Committee of the School of Arts (presumed) 1912

Photo (P.184) courtesy of EHA



Circa 1920

Photo (P.2041) courtesy of EHA

Termites have always been a problem in timber construction. The rear of the School of Arts building was set close to the ground on timber stumps, making it particularly vulnerable to infestation. In 1935 £10 was paid out for termite treatment. The 1950 ball in aid of the rebuilding fund was cancelled because the stumps were again in a dangerous state. Treatment had to be undertaken before dancing was allowed. In 1962 cement stumps were put under the supper room and the stone and cement front retaining wall was built. In the 1960s it became apparent the hall required serious reconstruction with termites again the major problem. It was decided the most cost-effective alternative was to lower the hall. Remodelling was to follow with tenders called in 1967. The tender of Mr. Larsen, a local builder, was accepted. The Ladies Auxiliary paid him \$1800 in March 1968 and the balance of \$491.25 on 29th July.

At this time the Eerwah Vale hall was annexed to the Eumundi hall and the building became an integral part of the newly lowered hall. The new hall was officially opened on November 1st, 1969 with an all-day program including fence painting, lucky dips and afternoon tea. Originally, the toilets were located behind the hall. Inside septic toilets were not installed until 1979. Town sewerage was connected in 1989 at a cost of \$2,825.

An application was lodged with the Maroochy Council in 1987 to expand the size of the hall by pushing out the west wall. This project lapsed. Shortly afterwards a wall was moved to provide more kitchen space, and the kitchen was refurbished. A bar was added in 1988 for the cost of \$2,190.



In 1998 the sub-committee of the School of Arts Hall prepared ambitious plans to increase the size of the stage and add dressing rooms, a cross-over and storage facilities. It was felt this would increase the usage of the hall by local and touring arts groups, and provide the community with a first class performance space. The Eumundi and District Historical Association Inc., trustees of the hall, agreed to undertake this project. Work began in May 1999 and was completed by September of that year.

Social History:

The Library and Reading Room

The library and reading room was an integral part of the 1912 new building. These rooms were located on the ground floor facing the main street. The School of Arts By-Laws had many rules and regulations relating to the use of the rooms and loan of the books. Miss Eleanor Trundle was the first librarian, a retired college principal from Brisbane. She was very active in the community and lived with her sister in Eumundi until her death in 1950.

The first batch of books was 300 bound publications. A number of the committee had previously donated books so the collection of literature commenced, to grow in time to be of the greatest aid to the people of the district.

Reading Room and Library 1912. Excerpts from Rules and Regulations

Rule number 20:

The Reading Room and Library shall be provided with such books and periodicals of an instructive and amusing kind as the committee may select and approve of and a librarian shall be in attendance and issue to members, at such time and on such conditions as the Committee may determine, keeping a correct record of same. Visitors to the district may be admitted free of charge to the Reading Room for a period of one week on being introduced by a member and signing a visitor's book kept for the purpose, but sixpence per week shall be charged all such visitors using room or rooms after expiration of one week.

By-Laws

Number 1: *the period allowed for keeping any work from the Library is fourteen (14) days for town members and twenty-one (21) for country members. By town members is meant any member living within a radius of two miles of the School of Arts and country members outside that radius.*

Number 2: *Town members will be allowed to take one volume and country members two at a time.*

In 1913 a set of Illustrated Shakespeare was donated by a Dr Comyn from Brisbane; two of the volumes are still held today in the collection of the Eumundi Historical Museum.

An excerpt from The Chronicle 1919 stated that additional publications had been agreed upon by the committee including *The Illustrated London News*, *Royal London*, and *Pearsons* magazines.

In 1929 the committee voted to pay the Librarian an honorarium of £3 per quarter.



An extra 100 books were obtained at this time and by September the Library contained 1700 books. The following year, 1930, book exchanges were arranged between local School of Arts Libraries at North Arm, Cooroy, Cooran and Tewantin. It was recorded in committee minutes that 50 books were exchanged on a regular basis. Representatives from each library decided on the suitable titles from the collection.

Various forthcoming events started to affect the library.

When WW2 broke out the library's patronage diminished owing to the decrease in population caused by those enlisting; as well as lack of funds for standing orders from the community.

When the hall was lowered in 1968 the library was moved from its space on the ground floor to the back of the hall left of the stage, with access only through a side door. It was moved again in 1979 when the inside toilets were installed. The books were sorted and many were in bad condition and no longer acceptable. Around the same time the Maroochy Regional Council started a free library and a mobile library began visiting the township on a regular basis. These events meant that small local subscription libraries were obsolete.

The School of Arts Library closed in 1980 after serving the community for over 60 years.

1914 -1918 War

The impact of WW1 on the small community of Eumundi was considerable. At the outbreak of war it had a population of under 500. In 1915 a recruitment train, known as the "March to Freedom" passed through Eumundi on its way from Rockhampton in Central Queensland, to Brisbane. It was reported that by the time it reached Eumundi there were 2000 eager young men enlisted. A recruitment meeting was held in the School of Arts hall and eighty young men volunteered. Twenty of those would never return.

To commemorate this significant event, for the ANZAC Centenary a re-enactment of the troop train's journey was made. The train had nine of the original carriages, beautifully restored, through funding from the Federal Government WW1 Commemorative Grants and the Queensland Government also provided a substantial sum through the Queensland ANZAC Centenary Grants program.

The re-enactment train stopped at the small township of Cooroy, just north of Eumundi, to a flag waving crowd. It carried around 250 passengers who had come from many parts of Australia and overseas to be part of this historic five day event. Many of these passengers wore period costumes from the 1915 era. The train stopped for two hours at Cooroy to enable the passengers to have lunch at the RSL Club, adjacent to the Cooroy School of Arts Memorial Hall*. Amongst the passengers was the Deputy Prime Minister, Warren Truss MP, Federal Member for Wide Bay. The township conducted a wreath laying ceremony outside the RSL Club and Memorial Hall (the Cooroy School of Arts) and there was a parade of a re-enactment team of nurses, drummer and twelve soldiers in WW1 uniforms.

* This ADFAS series of articles on Schools of Arts and Mechanics Institutes includes an account of the Cooroy School of Arts Memorial Hall.

See www.adfas.org.au Go to ADFAS in the Community: Schools of Arts/ Mechanics Institutes Project.



▼ Restored carriages of the “Recruitment Train”- Cooroy Station. April 2015



▲ Plaque on one of the restored carriages April 2015

Photos: Julia Gamble ADFAS



During the war many fundraising functions and war rallies were organised in the hall. The Red Cross, The Comforts Fund, and the Women's Patriotic Committee regularly held meetings there. The hall was the main venue for patriotic fundraising and the hall committee at this time found itself short of funds to repay the debt and for maintenance, as the hall usage was either free of charge or the proceeds were donated to patriotic funds.

The absence of the eighty young men who were recruited had a considerable impact on the small community. When twenty of these men failed to return the Eumundi Women's Patriotic Committee decided to commemorate these men, not by a monument, which would have been the common practice in country Queensland, but by an avenue of trees in the main street. They raised approximately £100 by public subscription to plant the twenty trees during and after the war, with each of the young trees enclosed by a white paling fence bearing a bronze tablet with the name and service details of the fallen soldier.

The original species were fig of which five still stand today. Other species have since replaced the trees that have not been so long lived, including camphor laurels, lilly pillies, jacarandas, and flame trees.

The Chronicle 29th August 1919:

Under the auspices of the Women's Patriotic committee a third tree planting ceremony took place here on Saturday afternoon last. Notwithstanding the somewhat unfavourable weather conditions a large number of the residents were in attendance to do honour to our fallen soldiers. At 2.30pm a procession of State School children and returned soldiers (in uniform) was formed in front of the School and marched to Gridley Street, where the trees were to be planted. Mr G H Cooke acted as master of ceremonies. After the singing of the National Anthem, Mr A H Brookes (Nambour) delivered an eloquent address.

"There are now twenty memorial trees planted in Eumundi, which in addition to keeping the memories of our fallen boys ever green, will help to show that our little town and district did its bit in the great fight for freedom and justice for all".

The impact of these trees in the community resulted in the main thoroughfare of the town, known previously as Main Street, being changed in 1977 to be called Memorial Drive.

The Memorial Trees are listed on the Queensland Heritage Register, Number 601122; and on the National Trust Register as of November 22 1997.

Today each tree has at its base a bronze plaque which details the name, date and circumstance of the fallen soldiers. Each Anzac Day the plaques are surrounded by floral tributes.

"Lest We Forget"



The young Memorial trees, each fenced for protection, line the main thoroughfare of the town ca 1920
Photo (P.230) courtesy of EHA



Original Memorial Tree c 2015
Photo: Julia.Gamble ADFAS

The photograph shows the bronze plaque at the base of the tree, slightly to right of centre.
Memorial wreaths are laid at the base of the plaque



Updated Roll of Honour in the School of Arts Hall 2015

Photo: Julia Gamble ADFAS

The original Roll of Honour in the Hall had the soldiers' names inscribed as they enlisted. This was updated after WW2 and the names were listed alphabetically.

Films and Picture Shows

In the early 1920s the first travelling "Talking Pictures" show arrived in Eumundi. The School of Arts Hall was used for the screenings. They installed a projector and generating set. In the early days there was a showing once a fortnight but after a few months it was not financially viable and closed down. In 1923 the Wilson Brothers bought the plant and ran the movies, although at a loss. The turning point was a "Cowboy and Indian" film that brought many more people to the movies. In the 1930s they applied for a three year lease, with a two year renewal option, to use the Hall on Saturday nights at 15 shillings per night. The brothers enlarged the projection room in 1931 at a cost of eighteen pounds and five shillings. The ownership of the screenings changed hands from time to time until its closure in 1962-63.

In 1952 an attendance of 300 was commonplace with the admission price from 11 pence to three shillings and sixpence. Seating was in canvas chairs and rows of eight deck chairs joined together.



The Saturday night movie was the social highlight of the week. The patrons who did not have their own transport arrived on the back of the local cream truck. The nearby township of Yandina sometimes showed the same movies, so the film reels were taken halfway down the highway and the copies were exchanged.

The nightly programme consisted of The National Anthem, Movietone News, Cartoon, Serial, Movie and then the interval. After the interval, preview of coming movies was shown and then the second movie.

When television commenced in 1959 there was a huge decline in the Saturday night movies and they were closed in 1963.

Dances and Balls

Queen Competitions, debutante balls, formal balls, fancy dress balls, and dances were the regular social highlight of the Hall. There are records of dances held in the school building before the Hall was even built. During the war years social events still took place.

In September 1920 a Fancy Dress Ball was sponsored by the Ladies Benefit Committee. The object of the Ball was to assist in reducing the debt on the Hall.



Fancy Dress Benefits Ball 1920
Photo courtesy of EHA



The Chronicle 3rd September 1920:

Notwithstanding the counter attractions at Yandina, Belli and Woombye on Friday evening last and the prevailing "flu" and other epidemics, the School of Arts Benefit Ball was well patronised and proved very successful, the gross takings amounting to twenty pounds. The hall was nicely decorated with flags and palms by some of our local returned soldiers and the floor was in splendid order. The ladies committee provided an excellent supper which was highly appreciated. Music was supplied by Miss Williams (Gympie) and Mr A. Carroll made an efficient M.C. The fancy dress worn, although not numerous were good, two in particular causing much merriment.

The prize winners were as follows:

Miss Cook, Spanish dancer, (Special prize donated by Mr. E. Wainwright) 1.

Miss Merle Duffield "High Cost of Living" 2.

Best couple Mr and Mrs J. Lamb "Good Night".

Other characters included: Red Cross Nurse, Mrs Evans; Knight, Miss Lamb; Roses, Miss B. Cook; Nurse, Miss White (Coolum) and Mary had a Little Lamb, Miss Wright.

Miss Williams (Gympie) and Mr E. Wainwright (Nambour) kindly acted as judges and gave general satisfaction.



Queen Competition 1926: Miss Muriel Maloney crowned Queen,
representing the fruit-growing industry.

Photo courtesy of EHA



Queen competitions

The Queen competitions contributed to fund raising and in 1926 the debt on the Hall was finally settled with £840 raised. This competition was supported by the three principal local industries, timber, fruit growing, and dairying, each of which sponsored an entrant who organised the fundraising functions. The crowned Queen at the grand ball, Miss Muriel Maloney, represented the fruit growing industry.

Uses:

The community usage of the hall has been wide-ranging over the years:

In 1913 the hall was consecrated as a Masonic Lodge, Queen Alexandra Lodge No. 231. It initially had a membership of 12 brethren. They had meetings in the School of Arts Hall until 1923 when a purpose built hall was erected.

The RSL

Over the history of the Hall it has been called the School of Arts Memorial Hall at various times. The honour board has long held pride of place. In 1950 the Returned Soldiers League were given a space in the hall and in return they helped with general maintenance. A special room was set aside for them on the ground floor. The membership slowly declined and in 1970 they amalgamated with a more active club at Yandina.

Theatre has long been active in the School of Arts. A drama club was formed in 1921 for a short time. In 1994, The Independent Theatre Company was established to produce quality drama selected from theatre classics and Australian plays. The need for a stage extension was identified and this was completed in 1999.

From 1937 until 1958 the Presbyterian Church held an annual Flower Show in the hall. Annual nativity plays were conducted by the Anglican Church from 1953 to 1962.

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Many recreational activities were also made available. Roller skating was popular between 1916 and 1931 until it was discontinued because of the damage to the "Crows Ash" floor. Indoor bowls commenced in 1959, Badminton was played regularly from 1956 to 1992. Activities at various times also reflected the current 'craze' which lasted for a period and was then replaced by something else that seized the interest of the community: Euchre Tournaments in 1930s; Boxing Tournaments in 1930s; Square Dancing in the 1950s.

Currently:

Today in 2015 the hall is still actively used for a wide variety of community events:

The Little Seed Theatre Company provides for young people from 4 -18, a space to explore their creativity and make theatre.



The monthly Eumundi World Cinema shows internationally acclaimed films. As well, Yoga, Kung-fu, Indoor Bowls, Flamenco dancing and other dance classes are among the many activities that are conducted in the Hall.

The community relies on the Hall to be the meeting venue for various community events including as the officially nominated electoral polling booth.

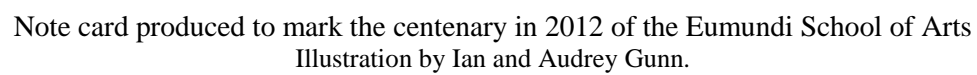
To celebrate the Centenary of the Hall in 2012, a re-enactment of the 1912 opening ceremony was organised. This included a procession down part of Memorial Drive, the main street, and a theatre style re-enactment of the opening ceremony, followed by a Ball where the profits went towards the ongoing maintenance of the building. The event captured the essence of 1912.



Procession Memorial Drive 2012
Photo courtesy of EHA

The Heritage and Visitor Centre also produced notecards to mark the centenary. They carry a wonderful drawing by Ian and Audrey Gunn illustrating the School of Arts and its activities. The original building with its 'A' frame staircase is fronted by ladies and gentlemen (of the Committee?) with the building in its current form at the front.

Surrounding all this is a border reflecting various School of Arts activities. From the top left: boxing, reading, drama, playing cards, badminton, billiards, flowers (flower shows) roller skates, the RSL, nativity scene (Christmas celebrations), the Australian flag with the Roll of Honour surrounded by poppies all marking the service of district citizens in war, film and projector for the picture shows, a debutante (balls), and singers (concerts etc).





In 2015 to celebrate the Anzac Centenary, the “Discover Eumundi Heritage and Visitor Centre”, led by Events Organiser Wendy Birrell, arranged a Centenary Ball held in the hall on 18th April. Set against a backdrop of sandbags and 500 blood red poppies, it was a night of nostalgia and a chance to remember the young men who enlisted from Eumundi to serve in WWI and WW2.

The attendees in dress of the period danced to the “Doo Wop Girls and Guys” and “Jack Flash” bush band. A loyal group of volunteers ensured incredible attention to detail which resulted in a fun filled evening ending emotionally with the notes of “We’ll Meet Again”.



Anzac Centenary Ball
with kind permission from Leo Wiles

The School of Arts Hall is now well maintained by The Eumundi and District Historical Association Inc. which was formed in 1976 by a group of dedicated individuals interested in the Eumundi community and its history. In 1989 the Association was appointed trustee of the building.

With the Eumundi and District Historical Association’s care and guidance the hall which has served its local community for over 100 years will continue to be an important part of the community for many decades to come.

**Acknowledgements:**

Eumundi and District Historical Association

Wendy Birrell Manager, Discover Eumundi and Visitor Centre

Leo Wiles Photographer/journalist

References:

Eumundi School of Arts 1904 -1999 by Daph. Greer and Nancy Weir

Published by Eumundi Historical Museum 1999.

The EHA has given permission to use information sourced from the above publication.

Wikipedia: Eumundi

NLA Trove digitised newspapers: *Chronicle and North Coast Advertiser (1903 – 1922)*

Sunshine Coast Council: history of building

Heritage Queensland: Register No. 601122 - Eumundi Memorial Drive

Photos:

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