



Invites you to hear

## **Ron Baker OAM** **Speak about “The Coorparoo Shire”**

**This year celebrates the centenary of the founding of the City of Greater Brisbane and the abolition of the twenty cities, towns and shires**

The Coorparoo Shire existed from 1888 until 1925, serving the residents of Coorparoo and surrounding districts. Apart from the normal roads, rates and rubbish the Shire Council was responsible for numerous projects including advocating for the extension of the tram service from Buranda to Stones Corner, Greenslopes, Coorparoo and then on to Camp Hill. The Coorparoo Shire Hall was the first for having several services installed which were later introduced into the community.

Ron Baker, OAM has been a resident of Coorparoo for 55 years after returning to Brisbane after a stint of five years working in Rockhampton. He is a retired architect who specialised in the refurbishment of Queensland’s heritage and character buildings. After working for several architectural firms on multiple projects he joined the Brisbane City Council as the Council’s Senior Building Architect and for a short time served as City Architect. During this time, he was responsible for the restoration of the Brisbane School of Arts building in Ann Street the city. The restoration of this building resulted in him being awarded several Meritorious Awards for architecture. Ron also served a time as Heritage Architect with the Council. Ron received the Order of Australia Medal in 2019 for his work in the community. Ron has a passion for heritage and history. He is President of the Coorparoo and Districts Heritage Group and also President of the Coorparoo School of Arts and Memorial Hall Association. The Coorparoo School of Arts building was the former Coorparoo Shire Hall. Over time Ron has collected valuable information about the Shire.

Come along and listen to Ron speak about how the Shire of Coorparoo was established and the projects it undertook until its amalgamation into the City of Greater Brisbane

Where? **Alexandra Room (upstairs)**  
**Queen Alexandra Home Community Centre**  
**347 Old Cleveland Rd. Coorparoo**

When? **4 October 2025** at 2.00 pm

Non-members are welcome, but why not join our group? A small donation to offset hiring charges would be appreciated.

Contact President Ron Baker OAM 0412 944 095 Vice President Richard Jeffreys OAM 0411 511 369

**Mail:** Hon. Secretary. P.O. Box 1555 Carindale Q. 4152



## SEPTEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

We now have a new logo thanks to Sue McKenzie who also organised a new web page. This can be accessed by [www.coorparoodhg.com.au](http://www.coorparoodhg.com.au). Members are encouraged to visit the site and give your committee your comments.

This year is the centenary of the forming of the City of Greater Brisbane when the twenty cities, towns and shires ceased to exist after amalgamation in October 1925. The Royal Historical Society of Queensland (RHSQ) is conveying a significant History Conference celebrating the centenary of the amalgamation of 20 cities, towns, and shires into Greater Brisbane as Brisbane City Council. A conference will be held on Saturday 11 October from 9:00 am until 4:30 pm at the Brisbane City Hall. This event will bring together leading historians, researchers and writers specialising in Brisbane's history to present papers exploring the social, political, economic and cultural impact of the 1925 amalgamation. The cost is \$70 for RHSQ members and \$75 for non members. Morning tea and lunch is included in this price. Tickets can be purchased by E mailing [greaterbrisbaneconference.evenbright.com.au](mailto:greaterbrisbaneconference.evenbright.com.au)

In addition to this conference, there will be a display of the former cities, towns and shires in the City Hall on 1 October 2025. Our group will have a display there and members of the committee will be there to encourage member of the public to join our group. This display will be from 10:00 am to 4:00, and Admission is free.

Our guest speaker for the 4 October meeting is our President Ron Baker OAM who will speak about the former Coorparoo Shire. Ron is a retired heritage architect and is a long serving President of the Coorparoo and District Heritage Group, and has been a member since its foundation in 1991. Before commencing his own architectural practice in 1998. He was a member of the Brisbane City Council's Heritage Section, and for a few years, Secretary of the Council 's Heritage Advisory Committee.

At our August meeting we had Brett Mason speaking about the saving of Lieutenant Kennedy by the Australian Coast Guards. After being rammed by a jammed by a Japanese vessel, Kennedy then went on to become President of the United States in the early 1960s before he was assassinated. Brett was very knowledgeable about the rescue and kept us interested all afternoon. Brett has written a book called Saving Lieutenant Kennedy and several copies of his book were purchased at the meeting. Our group purchased a copy for the Eris Jolly Library. Brett has also a book titled Wizards of Oz. This book is about physicist Mark Oliphant and medical researcher Howard Florey and how they helped win the war and shape the modern world. We hope to get Br2 ett back next year to speak about these two remarkable men.

Our Treasurer advises that there are still a considerable number of members who have not paid their membership for this year, A membership list will be available at the front counter for the next meeting. Members are urged to look at this list when attending the next meeting. Those that are unfinished will be highlighted on this list. Your committee has made enquiries with the management of the Queen Alexandra Home to determine if a room would be available for our group To store all its equipment and material. A decision on this should be received shortly. If we have a room Avail at the at Then setting up the meeting will be a lot

easier than having to transport all the material for every meeting. If a room is available on the ground floor we will arrange to relocate back to the Kingsbury Room. The Eris Jolly Library is located on the ground floor in a room adjacent to the Kingsbury Room and as we have not been able to move the cabinet upstairs the library will not be available for the October meeting. Whoever borrowed books can still be returned.

Continuing our articles on prominent Coorparoo identities, in this newsletter we feature Vida Lahey. Vida spent some of her childhood and attended the Coorparoo State School She also had relatives in the King family at 'Erica' and the Blundell's

## Vida Lahey

Frances Vida Leahy was born on 26 August 1882 at Pimpama Queensland. The daughter of Irish born farmer David Lay and his wife Jane

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Jemima (nee Walmsley). She had eleven siblings including conservationist Romeo Leahy. She attended Goytelea School at Southport, Coorparoo State School in Brisbane, and later studied painting at the Brisbane Central Technical College under Godfrey Rivers (painter of Under the Jacaranda, hanging in the Queensland Art Gallery).

Her uncle financed a trip to New Zealand in 1902 which inspired some of her earliest exhibited works, as well as helping to set her up in Melbourne. She studied at the National Gallery School Melbourne under Bernard Hill and Frederick McCubbin in 1905 and again in 1909.

During World War I she travelled to London to be in proximity to her brothers and cousins who were serving in the AIF, as well as to study art when she could. She also assisted with the volunteer war effort. Following the War she studied with Frances Hodges, in Colarossi in Paris and in Italy before returning to Australia in 1921.

Vida was one of the first female artists in Queensland and Australia who regarded themselves as professionals and who sought to earn a living from practising their art. She pioneered Art classes for children and adults in Queensland, and she with Daphne Mayo were responsible for the foundation of the Queensland Art Fund in 1929, which helped to establish an art library and acquire works of art for the state.

She travelled to Europe in 1927 for further opportunities to study Art. In 1937 Vida became a foundation member of, and exhibited with, Robert Menzies' anti-modernist organisation, the Australian Academy of Art. She was awarded the Society of Artists (New South Wales) Medal in 1945, in appreciation of good services for the advancement of Australian Art, the Coronation Medal in 1953 and in 1958 honoured with an MBE for services to art.

Vida was a long-term active member of the Royal Queensland Art Society (known up to 1926 as The Queensland Art Society) and served on its committee for several years.

Vida Leahy's house *Wonga Wollen* was originally built for her brother Romeo Leahy in Canungra on a spur of the Darlington Range, and was completed in 1920. Later the house was moved to the Canungra township on a hill above the present Catholic Church and occupied by her parents David and Jane Jamima Leahy. *Wonga Wallen* was moved again by Vida and her sister Jayne Leahy in 1946 to a block on Sir Fred Chanel Drive. The house is list on the Queensland Heritage Register. Vidal remained at *Wagga Wollen* in St Lucia until her death on the 29<sup>th</sup> of August 1968 at the age of 84 years. She was cremated.

Vida Lahey is widely known for her oil paintings, particularly her 1912 painting **Monday Morning** which depicts the Lahey family home The painting launched her career upon its exhibition at the Queensland Art's Society annual exhibition. This painting is proudly displayed at the Queensland Art Gallery.

**Footnote**

Vida spent some of her childhood years in Coorparoo, attending the Coorparoo State School. Later her links with Coorparoo were through visits to her relatives who had moved to Coorparoo. She would spend several weeks on these visits.



Frances Vida Lahey



**Monday Morning** painted by Vida Lahey

