

Ipswich & Gooloowan House

We didn't stray too far from home for our September day trip.... the very interesting and historical city of Ipswich was our destination.

We had a large group of nearly 50 bus travellers and our driver headed straight for “**Gooloowan**,” family home for many years of the prominent Cribb family. In 1849 Benjamin Cribb, his wife, Elizabeth, and their three children arrived in the newly settled colony of Moreton Bay. They quickly moved to Ipswich and Benjamin opened his first retail store. His business prospered and expanded and, in 1856 he joined with Mr John Clarke Foote in opening Cribb and Foote's Department Store, which dominated the retail heart of Ipswich until it burned down a few years ago.

Elisabeth gave birth to another child in the colony but the harsh life took its toll on her health and she died in 1852. Benjamin was shattered but a year later he married John Foote's sister, Clarissa, and she produced another six children.

Benjamin went on to pursue politics and was in turn a member of the New South Wales Parliament and, in 1859, a member of the new Queensland Parliament, when the state separated from New South Wales. He was, apparently, a very philanthropic gentleman with the highest ideals and an interest in education and social welfare.

“Gooloowan” is a delightful home and the present owners have tried to retain as many features of its early history as they can. For example, the plumbing and lighting have mostly been retained in their original state. They were also fortunate in being able to purchase much of the Cribb's furniture with the house. As you would expect of a house built to accommodate such a large and distinguished family, it has a commanding position on top of Denmark Hill, lovely gardens, at least eight bedrooms, a library and delightful sunroom, as well as several living and dining rooms. There is a warm, friendly feel to the home and the present owners are carrying on the hospitable tradition of the Cribb family. We thank them for allowing us to roam, unrestricted, through every room in the house.

After a delicious morning tea, served on fine bone china, our driver took us for a drive around Ipswich to look at some of its many, charming, old Queenslander homes. Then we stopped at the **Fig Jam Restaurant** for a tasty lunch before proceeding to the **Old Incinerator** in Queen's Park. The reverberatory incinerator was designed by Walter Burley Griffin in 1936 and was used to combust municipal waste until the early 1960s. The building fell into disrepair and was due to be demolished but some sections of the community were aware of the historical and architectural value of the structure and they prevailed on the Ipswich City Council to grant them a one year provisional lease while options for use were explored. Then a member of the **Ipswich Little Theatre** – which was in desperate need of a venue – saw the possibilities for their rehearsals and performances. Much time, money and hard work later, the incinerator has been given a new lease of life and now provides a small, intimate auditorium for Little Theatre productions, with all the necessary facilities.

Our thanks, once again, to Valerie May for organising another interesting and rewarding outing.

Jane James