

Cooke Park

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Hinterland Gems



Appreciating the past at Cooke Park

by Gay Liddington

COOKE PARK NESTLES in the heart of Maleny. It is where children play, friends meet and people gather to catch the bus. In season, a flame tree sheds its spent flowers onto paths while a plaque on the fence pays homage to the park's history.

The plaque reads: *This park was dedicated by all the children of the late A.C.K. & A.M. Cooke as a tribute to the memory of their parents.*

Embedded in the town's pathways and buildings are the stories of pioneers such as the Cooke family.

Dairy farmer Alfred Charles King Cooke, his wife Ada Margaret and children settled in Maleny in the early 1900s. The family played a primary role in the town's development.

Granddaughter Margaret Thompson (nee Cooke), resident of Witta shared her memories and family history.

"In 1909, Granddad built a house in Maple Street for his family and named it 'Rosedale'. Later, it was converted to a guest house and is now known as Maleny Lodge.

"When I was a little girl I would visit Granddad on a Saturday morning. He would sit on the verandah of 'Rosedale' guarding his foot. He had gout and was terrified of bumping it.

"He owned that land where Cooke Park is now situated and also the block next to it which he donated to the community for an ambulance station."

Around 1910 Alfred Cooke became the licensee of Maleny Hotel.

"If he hadn't taken over the hotel they would have lost their license. He also built the cattle saleyards which were



Above: Maleny Hotel 1910

Image – State Library of Queensland

Right: A.C.K Cooke and Family

Image – Landsborough Museum

next to the pub and then started a stock auction business," said Margaret.

Ada Cooke's passing preceded her husband by 13 years. After the esteemed A.C.K Cooke died in 1946 the family donated a block of land in Maple Street to the community. A park was created in honour of their parents.

In 2009, Sunshine Coast Regional Council implemented a streetscape upgrade in Maleny. This included work on the Cooke Park frontage adding to the charm of the playground

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Above: Descendants of the Cookes, Margaret Thompson and grandchildren. Back: Chris, Keeley and Kael. Front: Seanna and Shauna

Image by Steve Swayne



with its cubby house, swings, climbing chains and spinner.

Next time you visit Cooke Park, or sit in the bus shelter out front or take photos of the glorious flame tree, spare a thought for those who have gone before. Pioneers like A.C.K. Cooke and his family, whose commitment to the growth of a township helped raise up Maleny to be the enchanting hinterland town that we love.