



Bloomsday in Brisbane celebrations beckon

Bloomsday will again be celebrated in Brisbane's Queen Street Mall with a program of readings, poetry and music organised by the Historical and Cultural Committee of the QIA. The program will start at midday on Tuesday, 16 June. It is a free public event and members of the QIA and their friends are invited to participate.

Bloomsday is a celebration and commemoration of the life and work of the great Irish author, James Joyce.

His novel, *Ulysses*, follows a Dubliner through one of his days in the life of the city. The day is 16 June, 1904; the Dubliner is one Leopold Bloom.

The novel itself was published in 1922. On the fiftieth anniversary of the day when it was set, in 1954, a group of novelists and artists organised a re-enactment of the events of the day – the first Bloomsday celebration.

Since then, the event has spread all over the world – including to Brisbane.

Come and enjoy the performance on 16 June and enjoy the post-performance celebration at Gilhooley's.

Roasting Jeff Spender

Speaking of celebrations, the QIA is organising a roast and testimonial for immediate past President, Hon. Jeff Spender KC, at City Hall at lunchtime on Friday, 24 July.



At Queensland Irish Association and The Royal Historical Society of Queensland's talk on *The Forgotten Irish Explorer* John Finnegan at The Commissariat Store on May 20. Picture shows, from left, QIA Director Mary Allen, who organised the event, with speaker Alan Finnegan and his wife Judy. More pictures on page 10.

Jeff retired as QIA President after nearly ten years at the helm on 14 April this year. I said in our last newsletter, the QIA would not exist today without Jeff Spender. His role in the Association being handed back to its members in 2017, instead of it being liquidated, was vital.

Details of the function and how to book are published in this newsletter. Numbers are limited to a maximum of 170. Book early to avoid disappointment.

The lunch provides a perfect and entertaining opportunity to thank

Jeff and Glenice Spender for their service to the Association and its members.

The Forgotten Explorer

About 60 people had a fascinating insight into the story behind the establishment of Brisbane at a lunchtime talk at the Commissariat Store Museum on 20 May.

Author, Alan Finegan, told the story of the role of a shipwrecked

Continued on page 3

 Queensland Irish Association
The Roast of Jeff Spender



Join us to farewell former QIA President
Jeff Spender on his retirement

on Friday 24 July 2026
at 12pm for 12.30pm start

Ithaca Room, Brisbane City Hall

Two-course meal and cash bar
Entertainment by Tom Kimmett

Tickets: \$69pp

RSVP before 10 July.

Booking form and tickets by email to functions@queenslandirish.com.au



Queensland Irish Association President Graham Moloney and Director Mavis Williams at a Europe Day Civic Reception held at Brisbane City Hall last month to celebrate the partnership, shared values, and cultural ties between Brisbane and Europe. The event brought together diplomats, community leaders, and business representatives.

Bloomsday in Brisbane celebrations beckon

Continued from page 1

Irish convict, John Finnegan, showing the ambitious but inept John Oxley to the mouth of the Brisbane River, to the site that would become Brisbane and beyond in 1823.

While Oxley stole the credit, Finnegan was re-incarcerated but soon after vindicated by the testimony of others engaged in Oxley's expedition.

And yet, as the appendices to "The Forgotten Explorer" point out, place names memorialising Oxley today far outweigh the number commemorating Finnegan.

The event was a joint project of the QIA and the Royal Historical Society of Queensland.

Thanks to QIA Director, Mary Allen, for her excellent organisation of this event with the Society.

Change to AGM

Though it is still some way in the

future, it is worth noting that the date of the 2026 AGM of the QIA has changed from 21 November to 14 NOVEMBER.

Those of you who marked it in your diary at the start of the year should change it now. The venue is still Wests Rugby Union Club at Toowong.

New director

The QIA Board at its June meeting welcomed the return of Angela Laylee as a director of the Association. Angela is a barrister and was previously a director of the QIA immediately after control of the Association was restored to members. Angela fills the consequential vacancy created by the retirement of Jeff Spender. The Board now has a full complement of directors.

Graham Moloney,
President,
Queensland Irish Association.

Calendar

16 June 2026

Bloomsday in Brisbane, Queen Street Mall. 12pm. BYO drinks after at Gilhooley's.

17 July 2026

The Ireland Funds Australia Brisbane Luncheon, Hillstone, St Lucia, 12.30pm. <https://irelandfunds.org/chapters/worldwide/australia/>

24 July 2026

Queensland Irish Association presents The Roast of Jeff Spender at, Ithaca Room, Brisbane City Hall, King George Square. 12pm for 12.30pm start. Tickets: \$69pp by email to functions@queenslandirish.com.au

25 July 2026

Queensland Irish Choir Celtic Winter Concert, Hills Church, Everton Hills, 2pm. Tickets: www.qldirishchoir.org

11 October 2026

Brisbane Celtic Festival, Moorlands Park, Auchenflower. www.ccaq.org.au

16 - 18 October 2026

Irish Film Festival Australia at Palace Barracks, Petrie Terrace. <https://irishfilmfestival.com.au/>

14 November 2026

Queensland Irish Association Annual General Meeting, Wests Rugby Union Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong.

17 - 18 April 2027

Queensland Manx Viking Festival, Allpass Parade, Shorncliffe. www.manxvikingfestival.com

First Friday of the month

Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band play at Friday Irish Sessions in Gilhooley's, Brisbane. See www.facebook.com/QIAPB.

Second Wednesday of the month

Tara Hall Dining Club, The Ship Inn, Sidon Street, South Brisbane. Contact Secretary Roger Thornton rjthornton8@bigpond.com or 0408 878 938

Last Saturday of the month

Tigh Gaelach luncheon at Easts Leagues Club, Coorparoo between February and November at 11am. Contact President Michelle FitzPatrick on mitchfitzpatrick@hotmail.com or 0403 384 223

Remembering Queensland's fallen Irish police officers

By Mary Allen, Director, QIA

In colonial Queensland, Irish-born and Irish-descended police officers regularly found themselves riding into danger across some of the harshest and most lawless parts of the colony. Long before patrol cars and radios, these men travelled on horseback through isolated bush country, escorting gold, tracking fugitives and trying to keep order in a rapidly expanding frontier society.

Some never came home.

The murder of Constable William Dwyer in 1883 was not an isolated tragedy.

Dwyer's death near Taroom remains among the most dramatic. The young constable was part of a police patrol hunting the outlaw known as Wild Toby in January 1883. Near Juandah Station, Dwyer leapt from his horse and attempted to overpower the fugitive, but Toby — covered in pig fat to make himself difficult to grab — broke free and struck Dwyer in the head with a tomahawk. Senior Constable Wright shot Toby dead, but Dwyer died soon afterwards from his injuries.

The story quickly entered Queensland folklore. Wild Toby became one of the colony's most infamous bush outlaws, while Dwyer was remembered as a brave constable who died trying to protect settlers in central Queensland. His death highlighted just how dangerous bush policing could be in the nineteenth century, particularly in remote districts where officers often operated days away from reinforcements.

Yet an even darker case had



Win McCormack with Constable William Dwyer's grave in Wandoan.

Picture: Supplied by John McCormack, Volunteer in Policing

shocked Queensland years earlier.

In 1867, Constables Patrick William Cahill and John Francis Power became the first Queensland police officers murdered in the line of duty. Both men were escorting gold and bank notes from Rockhampton to Clermont during the height of the central Queensland gold rush. Travelling with them was Gold Commissioner Thomas Griffin, a respected government official and Crimean War veteran.

But Griffin was hiding serious gambling debts.

According to later investigations, Griffin planned to steal the gold escort money and stage the crime as a bushranger attack. Near the Mackenzie River crossing, Cahill and Power were poisoned, then shot in the head while they slept. Their bodies were discovered days later by a bushman.

The murders horrified colonial Queensland. Griffin was arrested, tried and eventually confessed before being hanged in Rockhampton

in 1868. The killings exposed the dangers faced by early police escorts, who routinely transported huge sums through isolated country with little protection.

Irish migrants were heavily represented throughout Australian police forces during the nineteenth century. For many newly arrived Irishmen, policing offered stable wages, social standing and a career path in a rough colonial society.

The Queensland Police Force itself had strong Irish influences from its earliest years.

William Geoffrey Cahill was Queensland's first Irish-born police commissioner. Cahill came from Strokestown in County Roscommon and served in the Royal Irish Constabulary before emigrating to Queensland in 1878. He became Queensland's third Police Commissioner in 1905.

And [Patrick Glynn](#) was an Irish-born policeman who rose from constable to become Queensland's

Continued on page 5

Remembering Queensland's fallen Irish police officers



From left, Patrick Cahill, John Power and William Dwyer. Pictures: [Queensland Police Memorial](#)

Continued from page 4

first Deputy Commissioner and later Commissioner of Police. Patrick Glynn also served in the Royal Irish Constabulary before emigrating to Australia in the early 1920s. He joined the Queensland Police Force in 1922, and in 1955, he rose to the top as Police Commissioner, steering the service through a period of major modernisation before retiring in 1957. Glynn's career stands as a classic story of Irish diligence and quiet determination shaping Queensland's institutions.

The deaths of Cahill, Power and Dwyer became especially significant because they entered Queensland police memory early. Today, all three officers are commemorated on the Queensland Police Memorial in Brisbane. [Memorials](#) also stand near the sites where the murders occurred.

The story of Cahill and Power still resonates strongly in central Queensland. In 2017, communities gathered near Bedford Weir to mark 150 years since their murders. Historians described the killings as one of the colony's "most sordid crimes", involving greed, betrayal and the murder of two young officers carrying out their duty.

Not all officers' deaths were so well commemorated. Although rightly recognised as a hero today, Galway-born Constable Matthew Connolly was shunned by the police force on both sides of the bor-

der for many years after his death. He was Queensland's first police officer to die in the line of duty. On August 29, 1861, Constable Connolly, while on duty in the Gatton district, received an urgent call to deliver medicine to the sick wife of the District Magistrate.

He strapped the medicine to his chest and rode his horse onto the raging Sandy Creek Crossing, near Laidley - he never made it to the other side. His body was found the next day. The Toowoomba Chronicle reported on 5 September 1861: "MELANCHOLY ACCIDENT.— We regret to learn that Matthew Connolly, constable of the Gatton police force, was drowned on Saturday or Sunday, last, in endeavouring to cross Sandy Creek. It appears he was returning home after escorting a prisoner to Ipswich, and in crossing the above creek came to his untimely end. The deceased had been some time in the force, and was generally respected. We are sorry to say he leaves a wife and large family to mourn their bereavement.

"Perhaps the Government will at once see the necessity of having a bridge erected over the above dangerous creek, as well as several other crossing places on the same road, which are tendered impassable with very little rain."

The drowning was a tragedy on many levels, as his Great-great-granddaughter Juanita

Keegan told [The Courier Mail](#) in 2009: "After Matthew's body was recovered, his wife Catherine took his body to Ipswich for burial but was refused Roman Catholic rites by the priest, who also forbade his internment in consecrated ground for some reason unknown.

"Retired Magistrate Colonel Gray attempted to obtain some financial relief for his wife and six children, but this was refused on the ground that perhaps it was not part of his duty to be delivering medicine for the wife of one of the magistrates, even though he was returning home after delivering a prisoner.

"Unfortunately, because his death occurred at the time of changeover of police forces between NSW and Queensland (the Queensland Police Force was officially gazetted in 1864), his death was never officially recognised by either police force until 2006."

It took years of hard work for Mrs Keegan to convince those in power to recognise Constable Connolly as a police officer who died while performing his duties. His name is now engraved at police memorials at Ipswich, Brisbane and Toowoomba and he is remembered on the [Queensland Police Memorial](#) website.

These stories also reveal another side of Irish Australian history.

Irish migrants in Queensland are often remembered through politics, religion, labour movements or the gold rushes. But Irishmen also helped build the colony's institutions — including the police force itself. Many served quietly in remote districts, carrying out difficult and dangerous work in an era when policing was physically brutal and often deadly.

• *Thanks for your help to John McCormack and to Tracey Olivieri.*

Super-Mary-Poppins-fest- sure-to-be-most-fabulous!



The Mary Poppins Festival in Maryborough. Pictures: <https://www.marypoppinsfestival.com.au/>

By *Mary Allen, Director, QIA*

Maryborough is preparing for another spoonful of magic as the Mary Poppins Festival floats back into town this July, bringing nannies, chimney sweeps, umbrellas and perhaps more people saying Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious in one day than anywhere else in Australia.

There is more to the story than a flying nanny with a carpet bag. Mary Poppins may be one of the most recognisably English creations in popular culture — complete with London rooftops, chimney sweeps and Edwardian charm — but the woman behind her story had connections stretching far beyond England.

P. L. Travers, born Helen Lyndon Goff, first entered the world not in London, but in Maryborough, Queensland, in 1899. She had strong Irish connections through both sides

of her family. Her father, Travers Goff, was of Irish descent, and her mother also had Irish ancestry through the Morehead family.

In the 1920s, Travers spent time in Ireland where she moved in prominent literary circles and met figures such as W. B. Yeats and George William Russell, experiences that deepened her interest in Irish cultural and intellectual life. Through these connections she became increasingly drawn to Celtic mythology, folklore and mysticism, and scholars have suggested that the strange, magical and otherworldly qualities in Mary Poppins reflect elements of traditional Irish storytelling.

Later in life, she also maintained a personal link to Ireland by adopting a child from there. Taken together, her background adds a striking Queensland twist to the story: the

creator of one of the most famous “English” literary characters was in fact a Queensland-born writer from Maryborough with deep Irish connections.

This year’s festival arrives on Sunday, 5 July 2026, transforming Maryborough’s Portside Precinct and Queens Park into a world of imagination, music and family fun. What started as a celebration of P. L. Travers’ 100th birthday in 1999 grew into the official Mary Poppins Festival in 2007, meaning the event has now been delighting visitors for almost two decades in its current form. It is also believed to be the first festival in the world dedicated specifically to Mary Poppins and her creator.

Among the highlights this year will be an ambitious attempt to create

Continued on page 7

Super-Mary-Poppins-fest-sure-to-be-most-fabulous!



Continued from page 6

an Australian record for the largest gathering of people dressed as Mary Poppins-themed characters, with organisers hoping to beat the current tally of 182 participants. Expect entire families appearing as nannies, chimney sweeps, Bert-like characters and umbrella-carrying Poppins lookalikes.

Festival favourites are also returning, including the wonderfully chaotic Great Nanny Race, where competitors push prams to the finish line, and the Chimney Sweep Challenge, where speed rather than soot will determine the winners. Creative visitors can join umbrella decorating workshops, costume competitions and the crowd-favourite Grand Parade, where everyone is encouraged to show off their finest Poppins-inspired creations.

There will also be roving entertainment throughout the day, the Noah Simpson Trio performing folk-inspired music, the interactive Poppins Musical Trail, children's rides including the Chair O'Plane, dance performances and singalong finales.

For one day, Maryborough becomes a place where English rooftops meet Irish storytelling and Queensland history. Not many towns can claim they gave the world Mary Poppins — and fewer still can say they turned it into a festival.

For more details, visit marypoppins-festival.com.au.



The Script to return with Man In The Arena Tour

The Script are heading back to Australia, and for Irish music fans across Queensland, it promises to be another emotional singalong with one of Ireland's biggest musical success stories.

Irish pop-rock favourites The Script have announced their return for a three-city Australian arena tour in March 2027, marking their twelfth headline tour Down Under and another chapter in the long love affair between Australian audiences and the Dublin band.

Fronted by Danny O'Donoghue, the group have built a huge following through songs such as Breakeven, Hall of Fame, The Man Who Can't Be Moved and Superheroes, becoming one of Ireland's most successful music exports of the modern era. Across their career they have achieved six UK number one albums, eight chart-topping albums in Ireland and billions of streams worldwide.

The Australian tour arrives as the band enters a new era with their upcoming album *The User's Guide To Being Human*, due for release in August. Fans have already had a taste through new single *Man In The Arena*.

"We can't wait to take our worldwide tour back to Australia again," Danny O'Donoghue says.

"We have such a long-standing friendship with our fans and Frontier Touring,



it feels like home away from home. Get ready for another banging show!"

Danny has also spoken openly about how deeply Ireland and music are woven into his life and songwriting. "I love music, I love words, and I love being Irish."

The band's recent journey has also carried emotional weight. Following the tragic death of founding guitarist Mark Sheehan in 2023, the group's music has reflected themes of grief, resilience and moving forward. Danny

explained:

"Most people will never fully understand the relationship I have with words and music. It's how I process everything."

Queensland fans will have the chance to see the Irish favourites when they play Brisbane Entertainment Centre on 23 March, before the band heads to Melbourne and Sydney.

Tickets are now on sale (from 29 May) at <https://www.frontiertouring.com/thescrypt>

Irish star Dan McCabe to play biggest Aussie tour yet

Kildare singer-songwriter Dan McCabe will return to Australia in 2026 for his third and most extensive tour to date, following two hugely successful visits that have cemented his growing connection with Australian audiences.

McCabe first captured global attention in May 2020, when a single YouTube upload went viral, attracting more than 50 million views in just three months. Since then, he has built a reputation as one of Ireland's most compelling modern voices, blending the emotional depth of traditional Irish ballads with a

contemporary folk edge that resonates far beyond his home country.

His rise has been matched by strong recognition at home, with McCabe acknowledged by the President of Ireland and embraced by leading figures in Irish sport and culture. On stage, he has sold out some of Ireland's most iconic venues.

Now, after two standout Australian tours, McCabe returns for his third run — and the biggest yet. Each visit has drawn larger crowds and deeper audience connection, with his blend

of storytelling, heritage and modern folk continuing to strike a chord with Australian fans.

Australia can expect a tour built on powerful vocals, heartfelt ballads and the atmosphere that has made his live shows such a talking point both at home and abroad. This next chapter promises to be his most memorable Australian journey yet.

Dan McCabe plays Brisbane's The Triffid on Sunday 5 July. Tickets are now on sale from <https://moshtix.com.au/>



Joyce fans worldwide join up to read Ulysses in June

With Bloomsday just days away, readers around the world are already making their way through James Joyce's *Ulysses* as part of the Ulysses80 Book Club.

The global reading project, which began on 1 June, challenges participants to tackle Joyce's masterpiece over 80 days, with daily readings continuing through to 19 August. Each morning at 7am GMT, readers receive a message outlining that day's section, including the opening and closing lines and line references from the Gutenberg Press edition. Page references for a range of printed editions are also provided online to help readers keep their place.

Participants are encouraged to share their thoughts, questions and discoveries using the hashtag #Ulysses80, creating an international conversation around one of the most celebrated — and often intimidating — novels in the English language.

The journey began with Episode 1, Telemachus, at the Sandycove Martello Tower. By Bloomsday on 16 June, readers will be approaching the middle of Episode 8, Lestrygonians, arriving at Davy Byrne's Pub in time for Leopold Bloom's famous lunch of a gorgonzola sandwich and a glass of burgundy. Readers around the globe are being invited to raise a glass together to mark reaching the quarter-way point of the book.

Organisers hope the shared experience and daily discussions will help readers navigate some of the more challenging sections that lie ahead. The final episode, Penelope — Molly Bloom's celebrated eight-sentence soliloquy — will unfold over around 10 days in August before the project concludes on 19 August.

The date was chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the real-life letter by Joyce's friend Blackwood

Price that is referenced in Episode 2, Nestor.

The initiative is aimed at everyone, not just Joyce scholars. Its goal is to make *Ulysses* more accessible to ordinary readers, including those who have always intended to read the novel but never quite reached the final page.

Along the way, readers from all walks of life are invited to share their insights, frustrations, questions and discoveries through the online discussions that accompany the project.

Dublin bookshops Hodges Figgis and Books Upstairs, both closely associated with Joyce and *Ulysses*, are partners in the initiative.

To find out more, visit <https://ulyssesin80.com> or follow Ulysses80 on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/807437940911499>.
• Picture: <https://www.bloomsdayfestival.ie/event/ulysses80-3/>

The Forgotten Irish Explorer John Finnegan



At The Forgotten Irish Explorer John Finnegan were, from left, QIA President Graham Moloney, speaker Al Finegan, QIA Vice President Paul Hogan, former QIA President Jeff Spender, Glenice Spender, and The Royal Historical Society of Queensland President Stephen Sheaffe.



Having a Function

We can add a whole lot more to your evening.

Photo's (minimum) printed the same night and returned before the function finishes. We will do PR photos of the event at no extra cost. (subject to numbers) Studio lights if requested will be set up before guests arrive. There is no additional cost beyond the price of the photo's. This is a great way to have a memory of the evening.

Good Times Network Photography
Phone 0401450977
www.goodtimesnetwork.com



Speaker Al Finegan, centre, with QIA Historians and Life Members, Rodney Sullivan and Robin Sullivan.



Contact us

We welcome content from Members and friends in this newsletter.

If you have news or an article you would like to see included, email the editor, our public relations officer Mary Allen, at mary@queenslandirish.com.au

You can also reach us through our website, www.queenslandirish.com.au, and on our social media pages.

Another great way to interact with QIA is by joining our Facebook [group](#), Queensland Irish Association Friends and Supporters.

Editor and designer: Mary Allen.

DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed by contributors in articles, advertisements or any other published material in Queensland Irish Association Newsletter are those of the individual contributors and are not necessarily those of the Queensland Irish Association Newsletter. The editor reserves the right to accept, reject, edit or amend submitted material in order to make it appropriate or suitable for publication. To gain permission to reprint any material that appears in this newsletter, contact newsletter@queenslandirish.com. Queensland Irish Association Newsletter takes no responsibility for products or services advertised in this newsletter.

QUEENSLAND IRISH ASSOCIATION

Bloomsday

"THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DAY IN THE IRISH LITERARY CALENDAR"

TUESDAY 16TH JUNE

A CELEBRATION OF MODERN IRISH LITERATURE

At the Queen Street Mall 12 Midday

Drinks after at Gilhooley's Irish Pub



FOR ENQUIRIES

Call 0419673126 or email

enquiries@queenslandirish.com

READINGS | POETRY | MUSIC

Queensland Irish Association Friendly Society Ltd
PO Box 12745 George St QLD 4003