

Ian Hughes

# Forsayth



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Ian Hughes

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## Version history:

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## Image credits:

Cover: View of the town of Forsayth, Queensland, 1911 ([State Library of Queensland](#))

Forsayth State School, 1922. (John Oxley Library, [State Library of Queensland](#))

Joe Hirschberg driving a Cobb & Co. coach on the Croydon to Forsayth route, Queensland ([State Library of Queensland](#))

The former mining town of Forsayth, three hundred kilometres southwest of Cairns, is part of the Etheridge minerals area in Etheridge Shire. The settlement is the Etheridge Railway's terminus.

Known initially as Finnigan's Camp, after the prospector who discovered gold there in 1871, the township takes its name from the middle name of former Commissioner for Railways James Forsayth Thallon.

The township lies in Jangga country, which includes much of the landscape within the Etheridge Shire Council's boundaries.

Within a year of Finnigan's discovery, the settlement had become Charleston.

It continued to grow despite population losses when the inhabitants rushed after more lucrative prospects on the Palmer River (1874) and the Hodgkinson (1876).

Charleston Post Office opened in February 1876, was renamed Charleston West in 1910 and closed in 1915.

After a slump in the 1880s, by the mid-1890s, the area had three townships clustered within a few kilometres of each other – West Charleston (surveyed 1885), Charleston (1891) and Charleston North (1896). Castleton (1890) lay about ten kilometres to the south.

By that stage, Charleston was a flourishing centre with five hotels and a Court of Petty Sessions.

Charleston Provisional School opened in March 1895 and became Charleston State School at the start of 1909. In 1920 it was renamed Forsayth State School.

High base metal prices in the late 1890s saw promising copper deposits open up at Charleston, Einasleigh and Ortona.

After a subsidiary of the Chillagoe Company acquired several of the deposit, the company started work on a rail link from Almaden to Einasleigh and the Charleston area in 1907.

Workers completed the line in January 1910. It terminated at a new settlement on the other side of the Delaney River.

Initially labelled New Charleston, the new township was renamed after the Railway Commissioner. Since his surname was already attached to a settlement in southern Queensland between St George and the New South Wales border at Mungindi, the township acquired his middle name.



During 1910, Charleston's buildings, including the police station and school, which had previously been at Gilberton, were moved across the river to Forsayth.

New facilities and services arrived after the railway, including a new post office. A hospital, a new courthouse and a new school followed in 1912, and a public hall two years later.

Although the Chillagoe Smelters shut down in 1914 and the town's importance as a mining centre declined, Forsayth remained the railhead.

A gold battery operated at Mount Moran, west of Forsayth, from 1924 to 1936. The remains are listed on Queensland's Heritage Register.

After Queensland's Railways Department took over the Etheridge line in 1918, plans to extend the line to Croydon in the 1930s came to nothing.

Renewed mining activity and increased livestock traffic in the 1980s revived the town.

A bi-weekly mixed train ran from Cairns to Forsayth and operated until 1995, when the weekly, privately operated Savannahlander took over.

Rated as one of the world's great train journeys, the Savannahlander takes eighteen hours to make its way from Cairns via Kuranda, Almaden, Mount Surprise and Einasleigh.



The journey takes two days in either direction, leaving Cairns on a Wednesday and returning on Saturday evening.

The Forsayth railway station and station master's residence are heritage-listed.

Sources:

<https://www.cobboldgorge.com.au/discover/forsayth>

[Queensland Places](#)

[Wikipedia](#)