



HERITAGE SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET NUMBER 6

ROSS RIVER WEIRS

The Townsville Water Authority was established in 1882 to provide reticulated water to residents within the Townsville City area. This body held the rights to water in the Ross River and represented the needs of residents in the Townsville area only. The weirs were constructed as part of attempts to service the water needs of their residents.

As urban development spread in Townsville a large supply of water was needed. Hubert's Well was constructed near what is now the corner of Ross River Road and West Street in 1885. Other wells followed in the surrounding area.

However continuing water shortage meant that in 1908 the process of damming Ross River and thus artificially ponding water for local use began. Gleeson's Weir, the first of a series of weirs was constructed across Ross River downstream from Gleeson's farm. However water was not pumped from this weir until about 1923.

Prior to then water from Gleeson's weir was let down Ross River as required. It

flowed above the bed or through the sand to the pumping plant in Ross River near Thompson Street. This well was known as Top River well. There were one or two other similar stations in this vicinity and all these stations pumped water up to Townsville City via Hubert's Well.

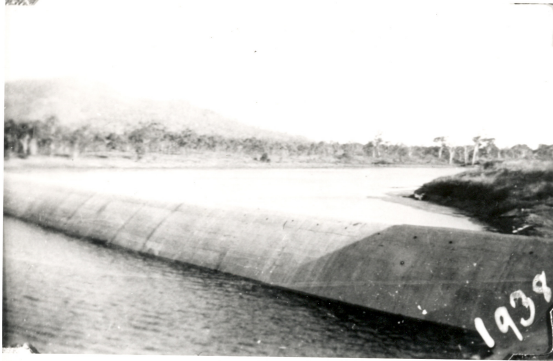
When electricity became available in 1922 all the pump stations were gradually converted from steam to electricity.

As a result of a tendency for high tides to force salt water into the sand at Top River wells it was decided in 1927 to construct a stop weir at the site of what is now Aplin's Weir. This consisted of a curtain of steel sheeting driven through the sand to the clay bed with a concrete overflow section about 1.2 metres above the sand level. This successfully retained water which otherwise would have percolated down to the salt water section.





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In 1926 a series of pump stations were installed along the banks of Ross River extending to Five Head Creek. This was so water which was stored in the sands of Ross River above Gleeson's Weir could be tapped. A pumping main was built on the river bank and the pumping stations were connected to it.

However this source of water did not prove to be very satisfactory, and in the early 1930s it was decided to construct a weir across the river at the Black School.

When constructed it was a hollow buttress weir with an ogee downstream shape and upstream sloping face. The abutments were stone pitched.

In 1934 extensions were undertaken to the Black School weir. A new pump well was added as well as new buttresses to the

right and left of the pump well. The original pump well and an existing buttress were also underpinned at that time. It appears that this additional work was necessary due to damage sustained to the weir during flooding.

Water restrictions throughout 1935 were very severe and it was only with considerable difficulty that sufficient water was supplied for Townsville's use.

Black School Weir filled in 1936 and there was ample water for a few years, but with the outbreak of the war and the quartering of large numbers of American and Australian troops in Townsville, the demand on the water supply again became critical.

This was met to some extent by the erection of a two feet high galvanized iron stop weir on the top of the earlier stop weir which functioned satisfactorily and provided a useful supplement to the weir's capacity. In October 1943 a concrete weir was constructed at the site of the stop weir. It was ready for use by January 1944 and became known as Aplin's Weir.





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In the 1970s Ross River dam was constructed at Five Heads Creek. In recent years a pipeline has been laid to allow water from the Burdekin Dam to supplement the Ross River Dam supply, which is reticulated throughout the Thuringowa Townsville urban area.

Acknowledgements:

- John Mathew
- Paper by Mr Ian Fairweather, City Engineer, Townsville City Council, 1966
- Thuringowa Library Heritage Services Photographic Collection.
- Townsville City Council
- Townsville Daily Bulletin 25 January 1944, 10 January 1973, 18 January 1973.
- Townsville City Council Minutes 1932, 1933, 1934.
- Townsville City Council, Minutes of Water and Electric Supply Committee, 13 March 1934.

