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## HERITAGE SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET NUMBER 17

### THE GLEESONS AND THE RETREAT HOTEL



Thomas Gleeson was born at Dulla Rathsburg County Tipperary, Ireland on 6 May 1841. He was a blacksmith by trade and came to Australia in 1864 on the *Castle Eden*. He made his way to Nebo west of Mackay where he met and married Margaret Bulger in 1869. They came to Townsville in the early 1870s and took up land on the bank of Ross River.

He established a blacksmith shop on the opposite side of the road and a hotel on

the river side of the road. He held the licence for the Retreat Hotel from 1871 to 1884. The hotel was located on the old road to Ravenswood and Charters Towers.

Dan Gleeson recalls

*“nearly all traffic to Charters Towers and the Gulf Country passed that way including the teamsters who transported all freight, which covered the*





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*necessities of life to those in the remote areas of our vast northern region...”*

The hotel was ideally situated near a permanent waterhole and adjacent to the camping ground for carriers before they continued their journey inland.

The Gleesons were one of a number of families whose lives were disrupted by the construction of the Weir airfield.

They were required to move out of their house at short notice and moved into a hay shed adjoining the property so that they could continue their business.

The lack of compensation for the disruption to their lives was a constant cry of residents faced with this eventuality. Indeed the Gleeson’s solicitor, Mr G Roberts wrote to the Hon AW Fadden in April 1942 on the matter of compensation:

*“If you were to be put out of your home at a moments notice, I feel sure that you would like to know what rental you were going to get before you committed yourself to finding another home, because you would have to base your rental for the new home, on what you were receiving from the Authorities.*

*There are streets of houses being taken here, and not even a word yet, said about compensation. If only a little bit of the red tape that the army seems to have to go through, could be got rid of, it certainly would assist matters materially.”*

### **Acknowledgements:**

- Gleeson, Dan, Oral History held in Thuringowa Collection
- Gleeson, Dan, Unpublished Memoirs copy held in Thuringowa Collection
- Underwood J.C., *The History of Weir State School*, 1981

