



HERITAGE SERVICES INFORMATION SHEET NUMBER 1

PIONEER PARK

In the mid 1970s the riverside reserve at the junction of Ross River Road and Thuringowa Drive became the focus for recreation in Thuringowa however it is not generally known that its use as an area for leisure activities began much earlier.



Pioneer Park 1978 showing club houses

Back in 1936 the Upper Ross Progress Association approached the Council for permission to establish a tennis club on the recreation reserve adjacent to the Weir; consequently the *Rossvale Tennis Club* was formed.

Club members from the Upper Ross and Aitkenvale areas constructed the tennis courts over a period of a couple of months from crushed ant bed, bush timber and wire netting.

It was hard work but Ruth Kelso recalls there was tremendous community spirit among members who were keen to complete the project.

When completed, members and visitors gained access via a dirt track off the former main road from Townsville to Charters Towers which ran along the riverbank.

As the Club developed, members decided to plant a rain tree (*Samanea saman*) on the west- north-west side of the court to provide shade for members. This species has come to dominate the park today.



Benton family with Ruth Kelso, George McCann and Marg Patterson, prepared for tennis, c.1938



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World War II bought the tennis club to an end as members disbanded and the courts and equipment disappeared.

After some years of disuse, the park was revived during the 1970s as a centre for sporting and recreational activities for the Thuringowa community and named Pioneer Park.

In recent years the Park has been transformed into Riverway – a recreation and residential precinct.

Acknowledgements:

- Peter Bell, *A Short History of Thuringowa*, Thuringowa Library Heritage Services, Thuringowa Central, 2000.