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Parkland has winning formula

The Village has officially unveiled its central parkland, which has been named after a Townsville racing legend, to coincide with Melbourne Cup Day, writes **Roanne Boldery**.

IN A fitting tribute Economic Development Queensland (EDQ) has named a 2.4ha parkland in their Oonoonba residential community after William "Skinny" Thomas.

Last week the descendants were invited to the official launch of the park, which bears the name of the Townsville jockey whose record of winning a full book of seven rides in 1929 has never been bettered.

"Since I was 12-years-old I promised myself I would find a way for my grandfather to be recognised for his achievements," Skinny's

firstborn grandchild Desley Thomas said at the opening.

"I started going to the races to get it done and I invited Townsville City Councillor Ray Gartrell every time, at first he was going to get my grandfather's name on a street sign but then he rang and said 'what about a park?' which was even better."

In time for Melbourne Cup Day the council approved the naming of the 480m wide parkland, dotted with grand century-old raintrees, children's playgrounds, picnic benches and walk ways.

"Oonoonba is not far from Cluden, where this history making event involving Desley's grand father took place, so this is the perfect location to celebrate Skinny's life," Cr Gartrell said.

"It's been a long time in the making, but thanks to Desley's persistence over a number of years to try to gain recognition for her grandfather, the residents of The Village now have an amazing namesake for their main parkland."

It's not the first time EDQ has named a park in The Village after a

Townsville identity as the State Government development organisation named their first parkland along the Ross River after Wes Barrett – a local policeman who served for 31 years and received a bravery award in the line of duty.

"We've chosen to name parks in the estate after Townsville identities," said EDQ senior development manager Meg Macaulay.

"It fits in with the rich history of the site which has been owned by the government for 100 years.

"Over that time it fulfilled several

uses, such as being a stock experiment and quarantine station and hosted cavalries during World War II. It has even been a crocodile farm."

Ms Thomas, who currently lives at Alligator Creek, is considering moving to the 1000-dwelling 93ha estate that's 3.5km from the CBD – in a bid to be close to her family legacy.

"I'd love a house overlooking my grandfather's park," she said.

"The houses are a lovely size for me, and it would be lovely to wake up every morning and go for a walk with my grandad."



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Maureen Thomas, Desley Thomas and Dorris Jenner, relatives of famous Townsville jockey William 'Skinny' Thomas, at the grand opening of the park at The Village, which has been named in his honour. Pictures: WESLEY MONTS





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At a glance

SIZES: Starting at 312sq m
PRICES: From \$134,000
LOCATION: Off Abbott St,
Oonoonba
OPEN: Sat to Tue 10am-4pm,
Wed 10am-noon
PHONE: 1300 650 689
WEBSITE:
thevillagetownsville.com.au

In the area

The Village was developed from 2011 by Economic Development Queensland, boasting a city-fringe, riverfront location that has retained established old trees within parkland landscaping. For information on The Village register your interest with The Village Sales and Information Centre by calling 1300 650 689, email info@thevillagetownsville.com.au or visit the sales centre on Riveredge Boulevard, Oonoonba.

Check it out

The Village's new park is named after champion jockey William "Skinny" Thomas who pulled off a remarkable feat in 1929. Skinny went to the Cluden racecourse and he lined up to a full book of seven rides which he won. In racebook order he'd ridden Own King, Kingsman, Constant Boy, Greengold, Pageacre, Northern King and Night Flame to victory. The record has been equalled twice in 77 years, but never bettered.

