

The Streets of York

Forrest Street & Forrest Oval



Both were named after Sir John Forrest, first premier of WA, in recognition of his services to the state. John Forrest was born in 1847 at Preston Point near Bunbury. He was educated at Hale School and then apprenticed to T.C Carey the assistant surveyor in Bunbury. In 1869 he became 2nd in command and Navigator to Dr Ferdinand Mueller on an expedition to discover the fate of Leichhardt.

Later he led a party surveying the route between Western Australia and South Australia and gained a reputation for courage and endurance, becoming known internationally as "The Young Explorer". In 1876 he was promoted to Surveyor General and in 1883 he was commissioner of Crown lands with a seat in the Executive and Legislative Councils. By 1890 he was Colonial Treasurer and Premier. His career was enhanced by his reputation as an explorer, by his strong adherence to establishing a local parliamentary system to replace the Crown Colony Government and by his introduction of reforms which included allowing married women to own personal property in their own right and the introduction of workers compensation. He was popular in farming areas, which contributed to the York Council, in 1903, asking his permission to name the Recreation Reserve "Forrest Oval" Forrest replied to the York Councils request saying...

Dear Sir

I have received your letter of the 20th ult. and beg to thank his Worship the Mayor for his kindness in desiring that the new recreation ground should be named after me. I can assure you that I value very much this courteous and friendly act on the part of his Worship, representing as he does the people of York; and it is very pleasant for me to learn that you associate the possession of this ground with the time when I controlled the interests of Western Australia. My wife joins me in all good wishes to his Worship the Mayor and to the people of York. Believe me to remain, yours very sincerely.- John Forrest.

1904 - cycle track formed around the oval at a cost of £37, one third paid by the York Athletics club and the remainder by the Council. Dressing sheds were also erected and improvements made to the grandstand.

1905- the York Tennis Club applied for land in the North east corner to place tennis courts, as the courts situated in Avon Park had sustained much flood damage during the past two years and it was considered "useless" expending more money towards upkeep. This was accepted by the Council as it would help to beautify the grounds. Many trees were planted during this time but efforts to beautify the grounds were held back by stray goats and cows feeding on the young trees.

1908- there were disagreements between the various sporting clubs and the Council as to who was responsible for upkeep of the dressing sheds and the grounds. Land allocated for a cycle track was damaged by Agricultural shows and dressing sheds built for football were broken into and inhabited by tramps. Neither the Athletics club nor the football club thought that they should be responsible for damage caused by other events held outside their sporting season. These and other similar arguments regarding upkeep and maintenance would be a continuing problem throughout the years.

1918- mains water laid from South Street across the Railway to the oval at a cost of £70. This was to enable the watering of trees and to provide an adequate water supply for Fire Brigade demonstrations.

1920- a trotting track was installed "second to none outside the Metropolitan Area". A special train brought enthusiasts from Perth for the Opening Ceremony with Mr and Mrs H.M Edwards laying on a morning tea at the foot of Cut Hill.