

Looking back with Molly... Diesel Engines, by Molly Smith



Creating a slice of history knows no bounds.

History can be created by people, buildings, animals and...diesel engines!

In May 1981 a slice of Walpole's industrial history left town on a Soltoggio Bros. truck.

Three big diesel engines, two Rustons (300 hp) a Merlees (600 hp) together with switchboards and alternators were sold to the firm and Walpole Sawmill Manager at the time Jack Pears, indicated that there was a strong possibility that the units would be used in one of the northern mining areas.

These engines supplied electric power to the Walpole Sawmill prior to 1974.

The Walpole Sawmill was constructed by Swarbrick brothers and commenced operations in 1955 and its first power was direct drive from a diesel engine. Bunnings took over the mill in the early 1960s.

The first engine to drive an alternator was one of the Rustons.

Between 1961 and 1964 the second Ruston and the big Merlees were installed. As a point of interest the two Rustons were obtained from the Augusta power station, and the Merlees was brought overland from Melbourne.

In 1968, with the addition of two smaller diesel units – an International (150 hp) and a Caterpillar (200 hp) – the mill began supplying the Walpole town site with 240v power until the State Energy Commission took over in 1971.

The mill continued operating on its own power until 1974 when it was connected to the SEC. After Cyclone Alby the mill was able to continue working on these large power providers once again until power was restored.

Another interesting point is that at one time prior to 1974 when the engines were operating, the mill was able to assist the SEC by providing alternate power from Walpole through to Young Siding while work was carried out on the renewal of lines from Albany to Young Siding.

One wonders if these power providers could possibly be still operating somewhere or are they lying idle in a shed or even in the open.

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WALPOLE COUNTRY CLUB ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held on WEDNESDAY
OCTOBER 26, 2016
at 7.30PM in the club rooms.

Nominations for officers of the club and 2 committee members are sought. Forms available on the Club General Notice Board.

All members welcome
Light refreshments will be served after the meeting.

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