

# LOOKING BACK...with Molly

## In the beginning...

Eighty-seven years ago the vibrant town of Walpole was scarcely a dot on a map. However the area was certainly a gleam in the eye of Sir James Mitchell who was determined that it be developed into farming country. The depression years of 1928 and 1929 were extremely difficult years for all and the working man was hard put to make ends meet for his family due to the shortage of jobs.

This strengthened the resolve of Sir James and he instigated the Nornalup Land Settlement Scheme which called for healthy family men to take up land in the area. An advertisement to this effect drew many applicants and following the initial interviews, one hundred men were selected to form the nucleus of the infant settlement.

The men travelled to Nornalup by train and from there to the main camp in what is now Walpole, by truck. Poor weather hampered the trip and the difficulty in setting up camp in such conditions together with coping with mosquitoes certainly would have dampened any enthusiasm the group had.

One of them was the late Jack Clarke (father of Win Pascoe) who later said that he wished he could turn around and go home! Next morning, however, when Jack visited the store for provisions he couldn't resist buying some fishing tackle that was on display. Later in the day he set up his line and cast in from the shore of the inlet and it wasn't long before he landed a decent size black bream! Jack admitted that things looked a lot brighter and even the sun was shining!

This initial group of settlers were the roadmakers. They followed the team of men surveying the blocks. In all, 85 out of the 100 blocks were settled. Some areas proved to be unfit and some new settlers could not cope with the difficult conditions and left the new settlement soon after arrival.

The men were formed into groups of ten and each gang sent to different parts of the area to begin roadmaking - which in some areas could be fraught with difficulty.



When some roads were completed and blocks surveyed the men obtained their blocks by ballot. They did have the option of obtaining a block or continuing to work on the roads.

When the property was allocated each man collected a tent (8ft x 10 ft and provided by the Scheme) which he erected on his holding after clearing a suitable site.

It is difficult for us to even imagine the thoughts and feelings of these men faced with the responsibility of setting the wheels of the venture in motion. Without their courage and determination the scheme would have been a failure.

(Thanks to Don Burton and the Walpole Nornalup and District Historic Society for the photo which is included even though it was taken later in the history of the district. It is such an excellent and interesting photo.)

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