

LOOKING BACK... with Molly

Rest Point has been in the news recently and it would seem an opportune time to look back to where it all began...



Many thanks to the Walpole Nornalup and Districts Historic Society for assistance with information and to Don Burton for supplying the photograph.



Thomas H. Swarbrick (Snr) was born in Albany in 1888 and in 1913 married Nell Emerson, a young woman born in Melbourne in 1892. The couple met in 1906 when Nell was only thirteen. Apparently in 1911, Nell's sister sent money for Nell to visit her in Albany. However, Nell discovered later that the money had come from Tom. She had obviously made quite an impression! Their first son, Tom (Jnr) was born in 1914, Laurie in 1916 (died in 1917), Terry in 1918 and Harley some years later in 1929.

Tom was a very versatile man and could turn his hand to anything... fishing, bridge and jetty construction, working on a baker's cart and bread making were just some of his abilities. He obtained a twenty-one year lease of 25 acres on Swan Bay on the Walpole Inlet in 1925. He named the area 'Rendevous' and began clearing the land in preparation to build a guest house. Later in 1945, the name was changed to Rest Point.

By the end of 1927 a small guest house was almost completed and a road constructed to connect with the main road to Manjimup. Sixteen guests arrived soon after and seemed perfectly happy to accept the fact that some rooms did not have doors. A jetty, shed and a small sawmill were also built. Tom (Snr) also held the unpaid position of Honorary Ranger, Fisheries Inspector, Guardian of Game Act, and Enforcer of Boat Laws.

The beauty of the position and its surroundings soon became widely known and development continued. In 1935 the guest house was extended to accommodate seventy guests. Nell - a thrifty and careful housewife - supervised all the cooking and hired waitresses to assist. By 1937 tennis courts were added, the jetty lengthened and a rotunda constructed. The popularity

of Rest Point increased as the Swarbrick family were good hosts. Boats could be hired, or a family member would take guests out on the inlet.

Tom (Jnr) and Terry enlisted in the RAAF in 1940 leaving Tom (Snr) Nell and Harley to operate the business which did close for a time due to lack of visitors and staff during those war years. Tom (Jnr) and his wife Lorna returned in 1945 and business at Rest Point resumed. By the 1950s Rest Point was booming as a prime tourist destination. Four new cottages and a large shed were constructed. Sadly, Nell died in 1955 aged 63 years.

The demand for timber in 1954 was the catalyst to build a new sawmill in Walpole township. This was sold in 1961 and Rest Point sold in 1963. Following the sale of Rest Point the family moved to Perth and built up a very successful boat building business. Tom (Snr) died in 1969.

Tom (Snr) influenced his sons' lives greatly and apart from tourism, the family enjoyed success in sawmilling and boat building. Terry built his first dinghy at the age of 16 years and in all the men built 1500 boats including ocean going yachts used by Jon Sanders, David Dicks, Jesse Martin and Jessica Watson.

This is just a very brief glimpse of one of the families who were influential in the growth of Walpole.

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