

Tabourie Memories: Dowling Family

Dowling Family at Lake Tabourie: Michael Dowling

In 1956, then W/CMOR Jack Dowling and his family, his wife Enid and children Janny, Michael and Suzie, arrived in Nowra. They came from Jack's postings in the UK where he was from 1953 to 1955. Jack was now to be based on exchange with the Navy for one year at RAN Base Albatross.

For the first 3 months, the family lived at Huskisson. Then they moved to the Naval Base for the rest of the year. At the Naval Base Michael learned to fly a glider in the Naval Gliding Club, he was 13. After 40 launchings, he flew solo four times. On each of the 44 launchings, the glider climbed to 1000 feet before parting from its tow. The tow was a Navy truck which raced down the runway towing the glider with 1600 feet of fencing wire. At the point of separation from the wire, the glider provided wonderful view into the Budawang's Ranges. Thus, Michael's fascination in the Budawang's beautiful escarpment country, was established.

LAKE TABOURIE: Fast forward to 1969, Jack was by then an AIR/CDRE. Knowing that he was not well, he was persuaded by another AIR/CDRE, Jimmy Redrop, to take leave using the Redrop lakeside house in Oak St, Lake Tabourie. Jack invited Michael and his wife of two years, Rosemary, to join them. Michael and Rosemary had not yet arrived there when the following event happened. Jack went around to the only store in Tabourie. Upon entering the store, a person apparently the store owner was sitting down with the light behind him. He peered at Jack and said -'You are Jack Dowliog, aren't you?' Jack said I 'am, who are you?' The person said I'm Fred James. I was your FLT/ LTN in charge of gunnery in RAAF 458 squadron in Algeria in WW2'. Jack then recognised Fred. And so, the Dowlings and the James came together in a relationship which is ongoing first with Fred and his wife Joan and since Fred's death in 2000, with his son Michael.

Soon after that reunion, Jack and his son Michael went fishing for whiting with Fred and they each caught whiting on beach worms which Fred had caught on the beach at Lake Tabourie. On learning that Jack had developed Parkinson's disease, Fred made a very supportive statement to Jack. He said 'Jack, as long as you can hold a rod, I will cast it for you. And so that played out. Fred had many years of fishing with Jack, helping him with casting just as he had proposed. Michael took a photo of Fred fishing for whiting. Jack Dowling died in 1992.



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JOURNEYS FROM MELBOURNE TO LAKE TABOURIE: From 1972 onwards, Michael and Rosemary have made many trips to Lake Tabourie, always by car and usually via the Princes Highway. They normally did it in one go (about 10/11 hours) - loading their car with all that was required including their 3 daughters Caroline, Edwina and Sophie, fishing gear and their dog. Their principal attractions to Lake Tabourie have been the beauty of the lake and beaches, the bush flora and fauna, the warmth of the sea which provides good fishing and swimming, the Budawang Ranges providing adventures in the hinterland and great scenery and being far away from Melbourne - it is so restful. It provides a wonderful holiday in natural surroundings. Fred James not only led the fishing, but he also joined the Dowlings and others in picnics combined with fishing and swimming.



STAYING AT LAKE TABOURIE: The family mostly stayed in Fred's flats 'Castaway' but in some years in the 'Sunseekers flats' then owned by Len and Annette Parsons. Michael invited his school and university friends Graeme and Margaret Henshaw and Chris and Margery Renwick to join them. Michael says that he and Rosemary have visited Lake Tabourie more than 30 times. The Henshaws and Renwicks would be more than 15 times each (Michael thinks).

Other people who joined the Dowling at Lake Tabourie were George and Adie Simmons from Lopez Island in the San Juans off Seattle. Michael acted for George in a major intellectual property case in the Supreme Court of Victoria. George was smitten by Lake Tabourie for all its principal attractions above and a memorable fishing expedition to Meroo beach where the group went fishing including Fred, Michael, and George caught more than 75 whiting in a 2 hour session. As they approached the beach by Michael's 4WD, the wave rolling over towards the beach was golden with sand whiting. George was riveted on the fishing and did not notice that his pale feet were burning in the sun - painful for days. After his first visit, George visited Lake Tabourie on several occasions even when Michael was not available to go there. George died in about 2000. Fred James also joined picnics with the Dowlings and Simmons families.

Since 2000, many visits have been made to Lake Tabourie by Michael and Rosemary usually in March or April, joining up with Michael James, and sometimes with the Renwicks and Henshaws.

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The Dowling daughters are all married Caroline lives in Melbourne and is a urologist. She has four children. Edwina lives in West Sussex UK, and is training corporates. She has two children. Sophie lives in Brisbane and is a school counsellor. She has two children. It is a mark of the Dowling family's love of Lake Tabourie they plan many a summer Family reunion at Lake Tabourie

THE DOWLINGS AND SOME PEOPLE WHO HAVE HOUSES AT LAKE TABOURIE: Rosemary does not fish, but she is an excellent cook including fish. She loves the beaches, the bushland and dunes and over the near 40 years of going to Lake Tabourie, she has loved taking her children and then her grandchild, and her dogs, to the beaches.

At Lake Tabourie and on the beaches, Rosemary has been privileged to meet many of the locals with whom the Dowlings have ongoing relationships. They Include Len and Annette Parsons, Maree Peden, Michael and Brigid McTiernan and Lindsay and Leigh Etherden.

THE THREE MICHAELS: Michael James and Michael McTiernan are both accomplished beach and rock fishermen with long associations with Lake Tabourie. Joining this pair to create the three Michaels, comes Michael Dowling. These guys not only share the same given name. They get along well, and they are keen to fish together at Lake Tabourie. Their combined respective years of connection with Lake Tabourie are more than 200.