



Peninsula Hotel

Stingray Point

Until 1898 Stingray Point was a peninsula that extended out into the estuary with a base that consisted of low, swampy land. This land was part of the allotment given to Thomas Peel upon his arrival in the Swan River Colony in 1829. After Peel's death in 1865 the land was inherited by Peel's son and daughter, becoming known as the Adelaide-Hall estate. This land in turn was sold to D. & W. Murray Ltd. The land making up the point was auctioned at the Perth Town Hall on the evening of the 16th April 1898, and we can assume that the land making up the Peninsula site was bought by interests associated with the colourful and flamboyant Kalgoorlie mining millionaire and future Lord Mayor of Perth W. G. Brookman.

Brookman built an eleven room, weatherboard holiday home on the point. The furnishings and decoration were of the finest quality, imported from Europe on one of the Brookman family's numerous trips. The pavilion jetty at the end of Stingray Point was constructed at the same time as the house and used as a dock for Brookman's impressive ocean-going yacht *Majestic*. The house was possibly referred to by the Brookmans as *Sans Souchi*.

The Brookmans holidayed in Mandurah for many years prior to their house being constructed, and the parties that they held in their new holiday retreat were both opulent and patronised by many leading members of WA society at the turn of the 19th Century. Often, the guests would plant a tree in the garden to commemorate their visit, and this is probably the source of the large Moreton Bay Fig that currently graces the point. The Brookmans are largely responsible for putting Mandurah on the map as a holiday destination and bringing much needed money into the town's economy.



Peninsula Hotel cont'd

At the end of Brookman's term as mayor, which did not run happily, he retired to his Mandurah house. After further declines in his business activities, and a split from his wife, he left WA, selling his Mandurah property in 1903/1904. The home was at first converted into a boarding house and changed hands a few times in the early 1900s. In 1907 the homestead was sold to Walter Bramwell; in 1910, Charles Slee, a lawyer, purchased the property for the price of £3,800; in 1911 the first licence was issued and recorded as a Wayside House Licence; in 1925 Hobart Tuckey and his brother Clarence held the licence and on July 1st 1929 the property was sold to Thomas Blakeley who purchased it for his son Harold who was not yet of legal age to hold a Publican's General Licence. The Peninsula Hotel stayed in the hands of the Blakeley family until 1991, when financial difficulties forced Harold Blakeley Jr. to sell. The Peninsula traded under new ownership until Australia Day, 26th January 2003. The hotel was then closed. Arsonists started a fire which destroyed much of the original fabric of the hotel on Sunday 10th August 2003. The remainder of the building was demolished soon after in preparation for redevelopment.

The Peninsula Hotel transformed from a holiday home into a hotel and "pub" over its lifetime. In the early years of the hotel, it was run more like a licensed guest house during peak tourist times than a "pub". Many of the visitors were leading members of Western Australian society, harking back to its time as Brookman's holiday home. During the early 1930s the hotel only traded at Easter time, for two weeks at Christmas, and one long weekend. At these times it attracted up to 150 people who were accommodated in marquees erected around the hotel. Meals and drinks were available from the bar and in the dining room 24 hours a day. The Peninsula Hotel evolved with the times and became a "pub" with live music and was well known for its Sunday Sessions.

Many people recall the footbridge which extended across the estuary connecting Stingray Point with the town. The footbridge was constructed in 1904 and had a raised section to enable boats to pass under. It made the walk into town easier and was used for fishing by holiday makers. Shortly after its construction debate ensued as to who was responsible for the ownership and upkeep of the structure. The dispute resulted in the local government authority, the Murray Roads Board taking control of the footbridge in September 1909 and eventually declaring the footbridge to be a public roadway. A water pipe was laid under the footbridge around 1940 for the use of campers on the point. The cost of upkeep over the years was extensive, and severe damage to the bridge during the floods of 1945 marked the start of a downward spiral for the footbridge. It spent much of the time from this point on fenced off and officially in disuse. However, the remaining structure was not removed until 1958.

