

The Borneo Bugle



BORNEO PRISONERS OF WAR RELATIVES GROUP
A MUTUAL GROUP TO HELP KEEP THE SPIRIT OF SANDAKAN ALIVE

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“Snowy” Jensen Recognition by Allan Cresswell

Carl Edgar “Snowy” Jensen received recognition from the Australian Government by way a Certificate of Appreciation presented by the Governor of Western Australia, Lieutenant General John Sanderson AC, at Sandakan Day 2002 held at Kings Park. A full report on Sandakan Day is detailed below. “Snowy’s” POW story is detailed on [page 2](#).



Carl Edgar “Snowy” Jensen receiving his award from The Governor of Western Australia Lieutenant General John Sanderson AC at Sandakan Day Kings Park held Sunday August 25th 2002

Photo courtesy Jillian Thurston

Sandakan Day 2002 Report by Ken Jones

An estimated crowd of 250 people attended the 2002 Sandakan Day commemorative service. Fortunately the forecast of showers did not eventuate which allowed the ceremony to begin on time at 11.00am and proceed as planned.

The highlights were:

- The Governor’s address, which was informative and gave a message for the future
- The student address given by Karina Travaglione which was well written and presented with a maturity that belied her age
- The presentation of a Certificate of Appreciation to Carl “Snowy” Jensen by the Governor

Our thanks have been expressed to the distinguished guests for their attendance and our appreciation is also extended to those members who gave assistance before and after the service, particularly “Odd Job Bob” with his vast range of tools and equipment and Keith Jones for supplying the P.A. system.

We supplied substantial information on “Snowy” Jensen, including a photo, for publishing in a newspaper as an article to promote Sandakan Day, but all we received were a few lines of publicity without any specific details mentioned.

However an article in the “Can You Help” page attracted an excellent response with inquiries regarding 17 servicemen who were at Sandakan. Since then we have formulated a “POW Service History” sheet utilising Allan Cresswell’s comprehensive database. These were sent to the relatives of these servicemen and were well received, and we are receiving requests for membership nomination forms from some of the relatives.

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EDITORIAL

What a great moving ceremony at Sandakan Day in Kings Park on Sunday 25th August 2002! In the spirit of last years' wonderful Tree and Plaque Dedication Day, Perth provided the weather and again the organisers did us all proud. The great crowd this year, which was almost as large as last year, reflects the effort and behind the scene band of numerous helpers. We do single out to give a special big thanks to Ken Jones and Bob Brackenbury for a job well done.

And wasn't it great to see "Snowy" getting recognition at last? There has always been some apparent but undeserved shame for being a POW, yet all these soldiers were trapped in a situation not of their choosing. The years of captivity resulted in many POW deaths and most went to their graves alone and without help.

"Snowy" and others who did survive, as well as our family members who did not come home, have never received the recognition for what they endured or for the heroism that they truly showed.

They suffered years of pain, abuse and unspeakable torment to represent and serve our country at war. Let us hope that history will record all POW service personnel like "Snowy" in the highest regard.

LEST WE FORGET AC

"Snowy" Jensen Recognition continued from page one

"Snowy" Jensen WX 9682 of the 2/6th Field Park Company, Royal Australian Engineers AIF became a Prisoner of War at the fall of Singapore in 1942. He and others from the 2/6th were sent to the Island of Pulau Bukom to repair the oil depot and storage tanks for the Japanese. Instead of placing the petroleum depot in full working order "Snowy" and his mates, using their mechanical knowledge, managed to sabotage the diesel motors by removing vital parts and making the petroleum, including aviation fuels, impossible to pump.

At that island "Snowy" and his two Western Australian mates, Ted Keating and Don Marshall, decided to escape and they stole a 30 foot boat in an attempt to return to Australia via the islands. But they ran aground and were required to sneak back to the camp making the boat appear to have slipped her moorings. The three had titled themselves as the "The Musketeers" and they were determined to escape home to their families.

Later they were transferred with 'E' Force to Borneo and at Kuching they obtained various maps, information and contact names prior to being sent to Sandakan. After arranging for an escape from Berhala Island another group used the information that they had obtained and went in their place. That group successfully escaped to Australia.

Later at Sandakan they continued to make arrangements for escape but the collapse of the underground movement brought many arrests by the Japanese Military Police, including that of "Snowy". Those arrested were interrogated and bashed for many months at Sandakan and later Kuching, where they were put on trial. "Snowy" was sent to the infamous Outram Road Gaol in Singapore to serve a two year sentence. There he endured shocking treatment including deprivation of food, beatings and denial of treatment for tropical diseases. Many soldiers and civilians died at Outram Road. Both his two close mates died whilst under arrest or sentence. Nearly all those that remained behind at Sandakan died of diseases, malnutrition or from the enforced marches across North Borneo.

"Snowy's" survival typifies the great fortitude and strength that he and all the other POW's exhibited during times of extreme torment and suffering.

It was great to see the proud look of satisfaction on "Snowy's" face as he received his award. Later the crowd massed around him to share in this special day and to give respect to a soldier who was representative of all other POW's who received such inhumane treatment under the Imperial Japanese Army.

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

Carl Jensen WX9682



Ted Keating WX8818



Don Marshall WX10932

Sandakan Day 2002 continued from page one

Now, our thoughts must turn to the 2003 Sandakan Day, we must consider fresh ideas to make the ceremony interesting but still maintaining the dignity it requires.

My thanks to the Committee members, both past and present, that helped make our first Sandakan Day commemoration a success.

Ken Jones Chairman, Sandakan Day Committee

President's Corner

by President Bob Brackenbury

Elsewhere in this Newsletter you will find a report on our recent Sandakan Day Ceremony in King's Park, but it is a fair bet that the only person not receiving a 'thank you' in it will be the person most concerned with its success. On your behalf I would like to add our congratulations for a job well done to its Chairman, Ken Jones.

Further congratulations are extended to our Committee Members, Allan Cresswell and Non Meston for our 'new look' Newsletter in the hope that it will encourage all members to make some contribution to it – be it photos, news items or positive suggestions.

Whilst on the job of handing out bouquets I must commend Ryan Rowland on his initiative with the Lion's Club of Boyup Brook and the local High School in putting together a Presentation after the annual Remembrance Service in that town on Tuesday September 10. Seven students took up the challenge to present their views on the Sandakan history mostly in the three part format of a recitation, poem and/or painting, or an audio/visual presentation. The depth of feeling and the confident deliveries of these fourteen-year-olds had to be seen to be truly appreciated. Unfortunately, there could be only one winner to take part in the Ted McLaughlin Memorial Tour to Sandakan with Ryan for next Anzac Day.

Two of the more sombre moments of the Boyup Brook proceedings were the wreath laying – one on behalf of our group – and the reading out of twelve names of the 2/4th Machine Gun Battalion who had passed away since the last ceremony a year ago.

Our group was well represented at the Service, complete with our Banner. Apart from Steffoni and myself were Ken and Margaret Jones, members Louisa and Jack Arnell, Ryan Rowland, Colin Prior and partner Margaret Douglas (our newest member) and Collie member June Edwards. Surprise visitors were Jenny Sandercock, the Co-ordinator of the Sandakan Association of South Australia with her husband Graham and their son. They made time to attend the Boyup Brook Ceremony and to see our Sandakan Tree in King's Park before heading back to South Australia a few days later. Unfortunately there was no chance for us to arrange a barbecue or any other opportunity for informal social contact with our members.

Recently we were also represented at a Remembrance Ceremony of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans' Association at the State War Memorial. Steff and I were joined by our Sec, Ken Jones, Allan Cresswell, Ryan and Trish Rowland and afterwards enjoyed a barbecue lunch at the shelter opposite the King's Park Tennis Club and were able to catch up with British Consul Hugh Dunnachie on a less formal footing. President Paddy Bacskai informs us that the NMBVA like other veterans' units are slowly losing members and appreciate the efforts of our small group to 'keep the memory alive'.

Any member who may like photos of our Sandakan Day Ceremony will have an opportunity at our next meeting to choose pictures from those taken by Ken Thurston and his daughter Jillian for this purpose.

The new phone number for the Australian Ex-POW Memorial Appeal in Ballarat, is 03 53323300.

The Committee has endorsed a proposal to proceed with an application to construct a permanent memorial at Marri Walk, adjacent to our Tree. The proposal, details of which will be submitted at our next meeting on the 13th October requires the endorsement of the members.

If the members agree to the proposal, the next stage would be a design, a construction plan and a cost estimate. This again would require the approval of the members. We would then seek approval from the Botanical Gardens and Parks Authority, the Honour Avenue Committee and the State RSL. If these approvals are granted, we would then apply to Department of Veteran Affairs for a grant to fund the project. We would need guidance on the selection of a suitable contractor. Our target date for completion and dedication would be Sandakan Day 24th August 2003.

We are also seeking endorsement and possible funding from the Department of Veteran Affairs under "Saluting Their Service" programme, to begin a project to visit schools in the metropolitan area to inform them of the tragic events of Sandakan. This aligns with our motto, "A Mutual Group To Help Keep The Spirit Of Sandakan Alive". To do this properly we must take a professional approach and plan accordingly, and we are currently preparing a plan to submit to the members. It is proposed to begin the programme early in 2003.

Our next meeting at Irwin Barracks is at 10AM on Sunday 13th October. Please wear you name tags for the benefit of any new members present and for the security checkpoint at the front gate. As usual we are invited to join the Engineers' Association who support us greatly, for socialising at the Ryan Club next door after our meeting.

Further Reading on Sandakan/Borneo

There are many interesting and informative books available on Sandakan/Borneo POW's. The following list is compiled for your information.

Borneo—Australia's Proud but Tragic Heritage	Kevin Smith	1999	0646372254
Sandakan—A Conspiracy of Silence	Lynette Ramsay Silver	1998	1863512233
Kill the Prisoners	Don Wall	c1997	0646278347
Borneo Surgeon—A Reluctant Hero	Peter Firkins	1995	0859052117
To Sandakan—The Diaries of Charlie Johnstone	Christopher Dawson	1995	1863738185
Return to the Dark Ages and Long Ago in Borneo	Bill Young	1991	0646088645
Prisoners of War—Australians Under Nippon	Hank Nelson	1990	0733300707
Abandoned—Australians at Sandakan 1945	Don Wall	1990	0731691695
Project Kingfisher	Athol Moffitt	1989	0207163758
Sandakan—The Last March	Don Wall	1988	0731653041
Australians at War—Prisoners of War	Hugh Clarke & Others	1988	0949118257
Singapore and Beyond	Don Wall	1985	0958984301
From Hell to Eternity	Peter Firkins	1979	0959531807
Escape From Hell	Walter Wallace	1958	
One Man War—The Jock McLaren Story	Hal Richardson	1957	
Three Came Home	Agnes Newton Keith	1948	0854563393

IF YOU KNOW OF ANY OTHER RELEVANT BOOKS OR PUBLICATIONS PLEASE LET THE EDITOR KNOW

CONTRIBUTIONS REQUIRED

This newsletter is published bi-monthly and we are seeking contributions and/or suggestions for feature stories, articles etc from our members. Please contact Allan on 94017574 if you can assist.

In every newsletter we will feature a back page profile on one of our soldiers. Non Meston has offered to feature her father in our first publication (see page 6). Allan will be selecting other soldiers for future publications so expect a phone call soon! Our next newsletter will feature **George L TAYLOR WX14775 of 2/4th MG Battalion.**

NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome ten new members –

- **Harry and Daphne Wrangmore** whose relative is **Sapper Cyril Davey** of the 2/6th Field Park Company
- **Bryan and Diana Jewell and Mary Regts** whose relative is **Driver Rupert (Bob) Crilly** of the 4th Reserve Motor Transport Company
- **Margaret Douglas** partner of Colin Prior
- **John and Sue McFarlane, June McFarlane and Violet McFarlane** whose relative is **Sapper John McFarlane** of the 2/6th Field Park Company

OUR NEXT MEETING

Sunday October 13th 2002 at 10.00am at Irwin Barracks – see you there



A proud 'Snowie' Jensen showing his award in company with his three daughters at Sandakan Day 2002

Photo courtesy Allan Cresswell

Boyup Brook Sandakan Memorial Day 2002 by Ryan Roland

The Sandakan Memorial Day on the 10th Sept. at Boyup Brook was well attended by the locals, 2/4 Machine Battalion veterans, Shire officials and good representation from the Borneo POW Relatives Group. A highlight of the day was the announcement of the inaugural Ted McLaughlin Scholarship Fund.

In conjunction with the local Lions Group and Boyup Brook District High School, the concept of a Scholarship in memory of Ted McLaughlin was created. The specific idea is to give the local school children the incentive to learn more of their heritage and the reason why there is a memorial site in Boyup Brook dedicated to those W.A Soldiers killed as a result of their captivity in Borneo. The criteria that was set gave children from year 9-10 at the High School an option to present an assignment based on a trigology- this could be in the form of a poem, speech, art or visual display (computer power point presentation) based on the Borneo POWs and the Sandakan Death Marches.

The applicants were short listed to seven, 2 boys and 5 girls. They had to undertake an interview with a selected judging panel, and then present their assignments at the service on the day. Everyone would have been extremely proud of their efforts, as I believe ALL were winners, however only one could be selected. The judges had an extremely hard time but did select a 15-year-old local girl who did a wonderful assignment, with the sensitivity, dedication and expression that had us all gripped with emotion. Congratulations go to Carmel McLean. She and her mother will be joining the Ted McLaughlin Anzac 2003 Pilgrimage to Borneo. Congratulations also go to Mr. Grant Wardle and his organising team for the success of the day.



Sandakan Day 2002 – Plaque, Tree and Wreaths
Photo Courtesy Jillian Thurston

POW PROFILE



Photo taken Malaya Oct 1941

Alwyn Douglas CADWGAN
Sapper WX 7472
2/6th Field Park Company RAE

Written by Non Cadwgan Meston

My father as you may have guessed was a Welshman – they called him 'Taffy'. He was born at Pontycymmer in South Wales in 1901. His family came from a farming background, but with his father, he and his brothers were for a time coalminers and were involved in the bitter strikes of the 1920s. He was training as a surveyor preparatory to becoming an underground manager, but he had contracted silicosis and in 1926 became very ill and was advised to migrate to Australia for the sake of his health. He successfully took up farming in Morawa – he played football with the local team – and had freehold title to his farm in 1933. Accordingly my mother (they had been engaged for ten years) left her career as an accountant in Wales to join him. They were married on the day she landed and left immediately for Morawa, where she learnt new skills of making her own bread and soap.

Life in Morawa did not turn out to be idyllic, through no fault of their own. Like others in the district they experienced seven successive crop failures from disease (rust and smut), drought, and plagues of emus and kangaroos that destroyed the crops. A spark from a passing train caused a fire that wiped out their home when I was 7mths old. When a moratorium on farm debt was declared in 1938 in recognition of the dire financial situation of these farmers, they walked off the farm and came to Perth.

Because of his mining background my father sought work in Kalgoorlie, but because of his lung problems was barred from working underground. Apart from this he was a very fit and active man. I believe he was in Kalgoorlie when war broke out, and he enlisted. He was in the first contingent of the 2/6th to be sent to Malaya.

Following news that he was a POW at Sandakan my mother went with other relatives of POW's desperate for information, to a meeting where she was able to contact two other 2/6th wives, Mrs Tom Hoffman and Mrs (Ann) Taylor. They formed a support group, 'The 2/6th Field Park Coy. Relatives Association', which met regularly throughout the remaining years of the war and for some time after the survivors had returned. This group provided enormous support to my mother, alone as she was in Australia.

I was delighted to meet Mrs Hoffman again recently, and to see that she had kept all the minutes of these meetings, and her correspondence with the many members.

After the war my brother remembers a visit we made with my mother to Hollywood Hospital to see some of these returned men, and especially remembers one who was nearly blind. He had a little vision, so that he could just see his watch on his right wrist. He was hoping to go to St Dunstan's in UK for special training. Mrs Hoffman tells me that this was Wally Whitehurst – who did get to St Dunstan's – and is still an active member of the Ex-POW Association that she also attends.

The interest and kindness shown to us by these men, which so impressed my brother, answers a question asked by all of us whose relatives did not return and whose history is not recorded – 'What happened to this deeply beloved man, and was he with friends?' I believe that my father, who died at the 19 mile point on the track to Ranau on June 2 1945, would not have been able to survive so long without the company and support of such close friends as his 'Aussie' mates at Sandakan. I am satisfied that this is true.