

# The Borneo Bugle



**BORNEO PRISONERS OF WAR RELATIVES ASSOCIATION OF WA INC**  
*A MUTUAL GROUP TO HELP KEEP THE SPIRIT OF SANDAKAN ALIVE*

August 1st 2005 Volume 4, Issue 1

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## **OUR NEXT MEETING**

**SUNDAY August 14th 2005**  
**AT 10.00AM**  
**IRWIN BARRACKS**  
**KARRAKATTA**

## **AT LAST!**

### **WE CAN ACCEPT THAT IT IS A REALITY**

by Ken Jones

Since way back on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> October 2002, when the initial motion was moved to construct a Memorial, there have been times when even the most ardent of our members must have doubted that it would eventuate, but on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> July 2005 the first construction pegs were placed in the ground at Marri Walk.

We have had great support from many organizations both financially and in spirit which gave us the determination to continue. Funding was always going to be the key issue and even up to three weeks ago we were not sure we had it all.

**The effort by the majority of our members in donating \$3,730.00 was outstanding.**

The Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority, who have given us great support from the outset, had some garden seat bases that were surplus to their needs and offered them to us. We enquired from the manufacturer the cost of the remaining pieces and in 24 hours we were told that they were donating two entire seats. Well done Krystyna Browne of Street Furniture Australia who made the recommendation to her head office in Sydney. This was a substantial saving for us and in effect eliminated the shortfall in the funding.

**Continued on Page 2**



**Day Seven – August 6 2005 Latest Photo of Memorial Under Construction**

Photo courtesy Allan Cresswell



## AT LAST – continued from page one

Outside of our Association there are many people to thank and they will be recognized at the Dedication Service. However, there are two engineers who have donated their services and deserve special praise. Rein Loo, who took Colin Prior's concept drawings and made them into engineering drawings and Rod Neaves, who has spent many hours with our Committee, the contractor and at Kings Park supervising the project.

My thanks to Rhonda, Allan and Keith for their great support.



**Day One – July 23 2005 Concrete Footings Poured and Spread**

Photo Courtesy Allan Cresswell



**Day Three – August 2 2005 Brickwork has Commenced**

Photo Courtesy Allan Cresswell

## President's Corner

by President Allan Cresswell

It is great news and exciting times with the commencement last week of the construction of the memorial for all our Sandakan Servicemen, with completion time to be only three weeks. This year it will now be a Sandakan Memorial Dedication Service to be held on Sandakan Day. Our Secretary, Ken, is putting the finishing touches to the format for the day. We urge all our members and their families to attend this historical dedication and commemoration day. This memorial is for ALL servicemen who went to Borneo and did not return home.

Recently I uploaded all past editions of the *Borneo Bugle* onto an internet website. The *Borneo Bugle* has been well received in the past and it was decided to put the newsletter online. This enables a larger audience to access the publication and also allows our members to view the photographs in colour. Details of the new website were emailed to over 100 people and organisations and already there has been over 600 hits to the site. These include residents and officials in Sabah and Sarawak as well as access by families of Australian and British Servicemen and various Australian Government Departments. A downside is that the site is slow for those not having broadband access (ADSL or Cable) although the file can still be downloaded and viewed offline at a faster viewing speed. The Website can be viewed at: [www.ozgenealogy.info/borneo](http://www.ozgenealogy.info/borneo)

During June 2005 I had the pleasure to attend the Honour Plaque Dedication Service where 10 plaques were presented to family members for placing before trees in Kings Park. Included was a plaque for Private Edward Burton who died at Sandakan. His brother and sister, together with our own member, Trixie Sullivan (Edward's Fiancée), received the plaque and it was a proud moment for them all.

Our next meeting is to be held on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August 2005. This meeting will finalise our arrangements for the big day to be held just two weeks later. I do urge you to attend our meeting so that you are kept informed of the latest details for the Memorial Dedication Service. Volunteers are also required for various functions during the dedication ceremony.



Our Association member Trixie Sullivan at the recent Honour Plaque Dedication Service for the dedication of Plaque for Private Edward George Burton WX7007 of 2/4 Machine Gun Battalion who died at Sandakan Camp. Trixie was engaged to Edward 63 years ago.

Photo courtesy Allan Cresswell

## SANDAKAN MEMORIAL DEDICATION SERVICE

Sunday August 28 2005 commencing at 10.30 am

Marri Walk Kings Park – 80 metres South of Kings Park Tennis Club

Toilet available nearby



## CUSTODIANS OF OUR NEW MEMORIAL

by Allan Cresswell

Our Association is privileged to have the Carine Senior High School appointed as custodian to our new memorial in Kings Park. Initial approaches were made to the school by our Secretary, Ken Jones, who was aware of the 20 year involvement by the school in placing poppies (and more recently – flowers) to every honour plaque in Kings Park, prior to Anzac Day. The School Principal, Mr Paul Ganderton, welcomed the opportunity for the school to be partners and custodians to our new Sandakan Memorial.

At a meeting on August 2 2005 Mr Ganderton accepted our invitation and pledged the schools support to maintain and provide in the upkeep of the memorial. This will be formalised at the dedication service. Both Keith Jones and I were also involved in a video production for the Education Department relating to a Values Committee Meeting. This meeting included discussion on the background of our association, how the school could provide valued support by way of custodianship and the resulting flow on benefits to both our association and that of the students.

Additionally the school is providing an ensemble, selected from the school band, to accompany “The Linties” choir at our Sandakan Memorial Dedication Service. The Head Girl and Boy from the school will also lay a wreath on the day. Well done Carine Senior High School for accepting our offer!



Carine Head Boy Stuart Hartman, Keith Jones (Borneo POW Relatives Assn - Research and Liaison Officer), Head Girl Holly James and Allan Cresswell (Borneo POW Relatives Assn - President)

Photo Courtesy Carine Senior High School

## NEW MEMBERS

We are pleased to welcome three new members since our last ‘Borneo Bugle’:-

**Laura Anderson** whose brother is **Private William Earnshaw** of 2/4 Machine Gun Company.

**Kirsty Cresswell** whose grand uncle is **Sapper Donald George Marshall** of 2/6 Field Park Coy RAE and Kirsty’s partner **Jason Williams**.

## LAUNCH OF STAGE 2 - SANDAKAN MEMORIAL WINDOWS PROJECT

By Lynette Silver

Sandakan relatives and friends,

Some of you know me, most do not, but who I am is not important. Some of you will know, most of you will not, about something dear to my heart - the Sandakan Memorial Window Project, stage 1 of which has just been completed.

This involved the installation of magnificent, world-class stained glass windows in the Church of St Michael and All Angels, Sandakan, as a memorial to our POWs and as a thanksgiving to the people of Sabah who risked, and gave, their lives to help them. I am ashamed to say, as an Australian, that this is the first time anyone has ever bothered to acknowledge their unselfishness and sacrifice in such a tangible way.

The reason why we chose this beautiful, century-old stone church, one of only four buildings in Sandakan to survive the war, was because it was here that so many of our POWs spent the night after arriving on the hell ships from Singapore. The following day, they marched off to the camp, and ultimately, their deaths. It is the only building anywhere which survives to this day and has a direct connection to the prisoners.

Our project, funded entirely by friends and families of the prisoners, and by other caring and generous people, was so successful that we were able to complete all four windows in the west wall and create within the church a POW chapel, complete with leather-bound honour rolls and an exquisite timber and granite table of honour.

However, as so many people have expressed their disappointment at having missed out on stage one, we have decided to launch stage 2 -to complete what we began by installing stained glass in the two remaining major windows, over the north and south doors. Mr Philip Handel, who came out of retirement to do stage 1, has agreed to stay out of retirement for stage 2. Like so many of you, he lost someone very dear to him at Sandakan.

Many of you will be so caught up in your loss and grief that you will be unaware that our prisoners left us a wonderful legacy - a legacy that cannot be bought or sold; a legacy coveted by politicians, but often out of reach; a legacy so valuable that it is beyond price. It is the legacy of goodwill and friendship between nations, forged by our prisoners with the people of Sabah in a time of great adversity. It is a legacy we must not allow to wither and die, especially in this time of great unrest throughout the world. We intend to reinforce and nurture this legacy, entrusted to us by our prisoners of war, by having it as our focus for stage 2. - friendship and love of our fellow man.

If you missed out on stage 1, or having already participated would like to continue your support, here is your chance to be part of something very special. However, while Mr Handel has the vision and the incredible talent, and his wife, my husband and myself have the commitment, the energy, the drive and logistical skill to make it happen, we cannot do it alone.

We need your help to make it reality.

I can assure you, every cent donated goes directly to the project. There are no management or administrative fees.

I know that you care about the Sandakan story because you are here. If you would like to turn your tears of sorrow into tears of joy; if you would like, in a year's time, to stand transfixed before a stained glass window of stunning magnificence and say, as we did in April when we dedicated stage 1 - 'I helped create that'. If you would like to ensure that the precious legacy of our POWs is passed to successive generations. If you would like to transform the tragedy and grief of Sandakan into something beautiful and uplifting; a testimony to the triumph of good over evil and a source of wonder, awe, and joy for hundreds of years to come, please send your contribution to:

**The Treasurer, Sandakan Memorial Windows Project, 15(B) Ada Avenue, Wahroonga 2076**

along with **two** stamped, self-addressed envelopes - one for receipt etc and the other for a photo of the finished window.

The Friendship Windows will be our legacy. We can do this, together.

Lynette Silver    Project Co-ordinator

## ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FEES FOR 2005/2006 ARE NOW DUE

**Borneo POW Relatives Association of WA membership is still only \$15.00**

Please forward your payment to: The Treasurer, Colin Prior, 23 Haddrill Street Bayswater WA 6053

## DRAWINGS OF THE SANDAKAN DEDICATION TOUR 2005

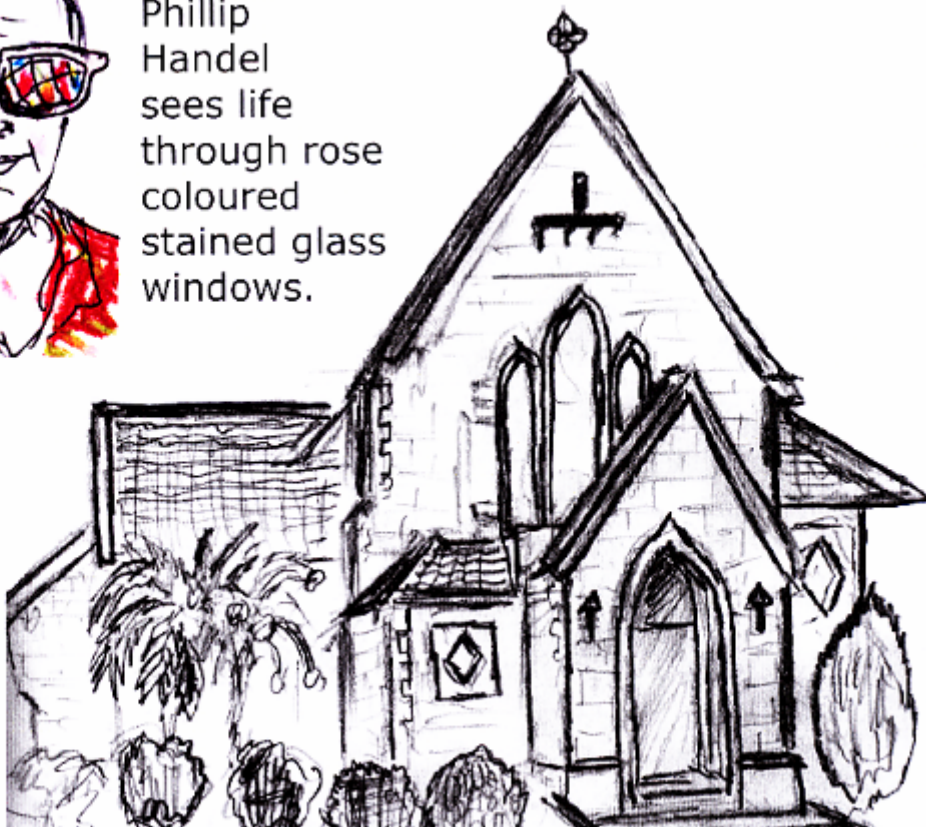
By Colin Prior

Continued from *Borneo Bugle* - June 1 2005

### Two views of St Michael's Church at Sandakan



Phillip Handel sees life through rose coloured stained glass windows.







A view of Mt Kinabalu from the fourth floor window  
of the Perkasa Hotel



The sun rising through the trees at Mt Kinabalu



"Their torn and rugged battlements on high".

Continued from Page 6  
Sandakan Dedication Tour  
Drawings by Colin Prior

#### A Personal Tribute To Lynette Silver

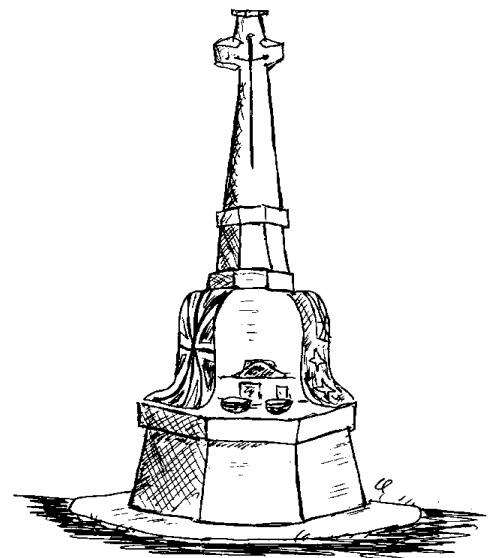
*Lynette*

*Her hand reached out  
To touch the heart  
Wet with tears  
From a sadness past*

*She saw the pain  
Of life's long span  
Without the touch  
Of a caring man*

*A gentle Aussie angel  
With a gentle mind of steel  
And a gentle way of knowing  
Exactly how we feel.*

Colin Prior



The memorial at Labuan War Cemetery

Continuing below is the final part four of an article recently written by Bill Young titled 'Once Upon a Time in Kuching'. Bill has in the past written a book, 'Return to a Dark Age', on his years as a POW at Singapore, Sandakan, Kuching and at Outram Road Prison and another article called 'Long Ago in Borneo'. His recent trip to Kuching in Sarawak brought back many memories, particularly when he visited the Hero's Grave. The five brave local men listed at the bottom of this grave were sentenced to death whilst handcuffed to Bill and his seven Australian mates who all received prison terms. Bill dedicates this article to the memory of these five brave men; Soh Kim Seng, Amigo Sik Bassan, Kassim Bin Jumadi, P.C. Kasiu and Sidik Bin Simeon. Thanks go to Bill for allowing us to share his memories.

## ONCE UPON A TIME IN KUCHING

### PART FOUR

By Bill Young

My friend Jimmy was good at languages and from what he could make out of the proceedings, the condemned men appeared to have been mixed up with one of the underground groups that had been secretly at work, undermining the Japanese occupiers. I believe the town of Jesselton had been mentioned during the indictment. Apparently they were doing much the same kind of work as Captain Matthew's and his men. So there you go, you can never tell. Five ordinary looking men, in the cloak and dagger business; Hero's all.

*-Again, through the benefit of her research, Lynette Silver, was able to give me the date of our trial, as being, the 26th. of July 1943. -It gives one an eerie feeling to think that, those grim days of heartbreak and trial are recorded among the many files that belong to, and that record some of the events, from those long ago days in Borneo.*

Court files at their best are but cold hard words, records without emotions; they don't tell of the thoughts and fears that lay in the hearts and minds of the people they record. The files from the Japanese military court at Kuching, if they were obtainable, would tell of five men who the court had sentenced to be executed, whereas in fact, those five men had been denied even this respect, as their lives were cruelly "taken" by their captors even before this decision could be carried out.

Emotions colour our lives, we paint with them such pictures. Taken from off life's palette- the primary colours of awareness, curiosity, aggression, are mixed with the white of life and the black of death. They create our own particular scene in the overall landscape.

In the darkness of death we reach out for the white light of life, and seek the colours from off its palette; in life, there is no other acceptable alternative, to life. No matter how dull we may have painted it.

Forty two years after our day in a Japanese court, and while walking up Spring St. during a reunion in Melbourne, a tall Chinese Chap stopped me and asked for directions. On seeing as how, curiously enough, we were heading for the same place, I invited him to come along with our group.

From this coincidence of two strangers meeting, from among almost three million people, I learnt that the gentleman's name was, Funk, Johnny Funk, and that he was a brother of one of the eight men who had been tried and executed with Captain Matthew's, and that both he and another brother, had also been sentenced in that same court. They had spent the rest of

the war in a Kuching gaol. The whole family had been involved in one way or another with the underground movement, fighting against the Japanese. Such brave people, they had given of themselves, to the utmost, and certainly, they too, of all people, deserve to be remembered and honoured, for ever and a day.

With our trial over, they bundled us off to the wharf where we were placed inside, of all things, a horse box, it still had a mixture of straw and horse manure covering the floor. Our first thought was that it would make a first class cabin, an impression soon put to rest, as the sun's burning rays turned it into a steaming hot box, then when the doors were closed, it became a pressure cooker.

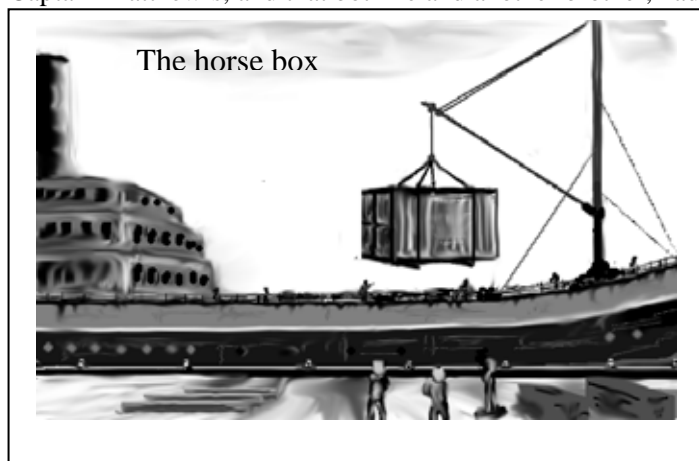
Claustrophobia never even had a chance to get a toehold inside that box; there just wasn't enough room for it.

You take eight blokes, put them inside a well used horse box, with the doors closed tight, let it simmer in the burning, hot tropical sun for a few hours, and without question you will have some half baked people to deal with.

That sure was a session and a half, sitting in the pitch black, stifling heat, with the "horsh" smelling shittier, the air becoming thicker, and us getting sicker by the minute, it just wasn't a pretty sight.



Interrogation



The horse box



--Eric (Mo) Davis, had been sent down from Sandakan to Kuching, and happened to be working on the Kuching wharf, on that day. Years later, he told me how their Jap guards had made them all face the other way, while the truck drove on past.

Towards evening our box started spinning around, first one way and then another, all in time with our hallucinations. It was like trying to ride a bucking horse blindfolded, with a Burr under the saddle. When the spinning finally stopped, we still kept going down, and fast, ending with a thump and a bump. Wherever it was, we were there. The "Chooks" had landed, and for a change, we weren't cackling, for we lay, a consortium of bodies; a tangled assortment of parts, trying to come to terms. Extracting our various parts from among the entanglement of arms and legs. Making sure nothing of vital importance was missing. With that over and done with, we set about rediscovering ourselves.

Marooned inside the stinking box, black on black, and inside the hold of a Jap ship. Crawling around, trying to find one another, "Is that you Jimmy" yes, "Is that you Allen". "That you Normie, old son", until eventually, we were all present and correct. With that we waited, glad to be alive, even if only just, while inside a box- a paradox.

The hum from hundreds of voices came through at us while the ship made it's way down the river, and out to sea. Hours later the top half of the doors swung open letting in the light allowing us to see just what it was that had aroused our curiosity. What a sight, it made our eyes pop, for the hold was full of Japanese soldiers. We were in a troop ship full of enemy troops, packed in like sardines. Presenting an unusual and unfriendly sight; most of them were dressed in lap-laps, with only a few of them laying down, trying to get some sleep, the others were talking and arguing, and, judging by the glances and gestures that came our way, their discussions seemed to be centered on us.

We decided on our part, to let sleeping dogs lie, seeing as how we weren't on good speaking terms. So we kept ourselves to ourselves; and peace be upon us all; hopefully for the duration of the voyage.

As it turned out we ate well, on great heaps of rice; we got all the Nips left overs, and happy we were for that. We gorged on the scraps; for much the same reason as the Polar bears gorge before hibernating for the winter; for we too were moving into a winter.



A cell in Outram Road Prison  
Singapore



The gates of hell-- Outram Road Jail

The memories from that trip, with all the food, its freedom from the kempei-tai, shined like a beacon throughout the lean years ahead. For they were long, mean, lean, and ugly years, those years that we spent locked up in the cells of Outram Road Gaol.

The moving finger writ, and having writ, passed on; as it did for us, and Borneo. Our time had finished there, all that it had held for us was over. We were into the first page of a new chapter, one that we could not begin to realize or, fortunately for us, see ahead. From being enclosed inside a horsebox, to being enclosed in a much darker place.

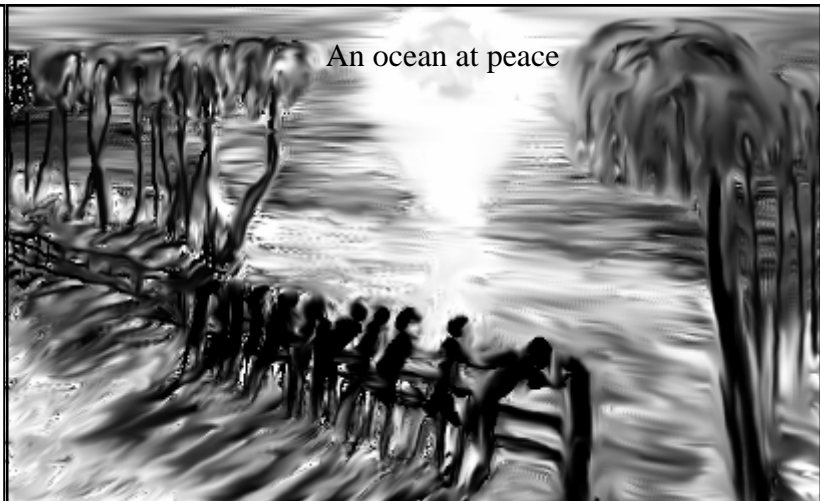
Our box was swayed up and out of the hold and then down to good old "Terra Firma and

Coy". The Chooks had landed once again, and having come from an aviary, we were going into a foul house.

We had arrived, we were there.  
We were there, we knew not where.  
We were there, for what it's worth.  
We were there, some place on earth.

--Again thanks to Lynette's research-- It was on the 3rd, of August, 1943 that we were taken to Outram Road Gaol.--

On the 19th. Of August 1945 they released us from the cells of Outram Road Gaol, and on that same night we stood on the beach at Changi, looking in awe at an ocean at peace. It was our first experience of the night's sky in over two years. We stayed throughout the night, for it was so beautiful to see.



*We stayed all night beside the sea, you se-e  
Because it was so beautiful to se-e  
A sea at peace In a world that's free  
It was so beautiful to see the sea  
So beautiful to se-e— beautiful to see.*

Dedicated to the memory  
Of five brave men

**SOH KIM SENG  
AMIGO SIK BASSAN  
KASSIM BIN JUMADI  
P. C. KASIU  
SIDIK BIN SIMOEN**

*This article is written in answer to a request by Mr. Lim Kian Hock of the Sarawak War Memorial Trust for a written account, for their archives, of the journey our group of POWs made in 1943, down from Sandakan to Kuching, and of our subsequent trial and sentence.*

*Bill Young.*



### POW Profile - Continued from Page 12

By now he was promoted to the rank of Flying Officer and the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbour (December 7<sup>th</sup> 1941) and entered the Pacific war. The withdrawal of the R.A.F. down the Malay Peninsula as the Japanese advanced from the north is a part of the detail in my father's diary. He and others from his "school" evacuated from Singapore on February 8<sup>th</sup> 1942 to Java. His diary details their movements around Java for the next few weeks. I assume they were trying to escape from the Japanese who, by this time, had overrun most of Malaya, Borneo and Indonesia.

My father was captured by the Japanese at a place called Tjasikmalaya, about 200 km S.E. of Batavia (now called Jakarta). The date was 8<sup>th</sup> March 1942. It was a Sunday and the time was 11am. He was now a Prisoner of War. He and the others that were with him when he was captured were taken to an old Dutch barracks at a place named Singo Sari. I think this must be somewhere near the city of Malang which is South of Surabaya, on Java, and about 500 km east of where they were captured. His diary describes many of the daily incidents during the period of about six months that he spent imprisoned on Java. Late September 1942, a group of prisoners were moved by train and then by ship out of Java and back to Singapore. The diary details this. They arrived at the notorious Changi P.O.W. camp on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. The stay here was brief. By 10<sup>th</sup> October, he and about 2000 other prisoners were shipped, by the Japanese, to Borneo. About half the number were unloaded and sent to Kuching camp when they arrived on the 11<sup>th</sup>. My father remained with the other half that were shipped up the West coast of Borneo to Jesselton (now known as Kota Kinabalu). They were imprisoned here from October 19<sup>th</sup> 1942 until 6<sup>th</sup> April 1943. Again the diary gives some life to the events in prison camp.

On the 6th April 1943 my father, along with many others, was sent to Sandakan. The prison camp here was run by an infamous Japanese Officer named, Lt. Hoshijima. He is mentioned by my father in the diary. Hoshijima was trying to build an airstrip not far from Sandakan by using Prisoner of War labour. As 1943 progressed and 1944 began, the tide of war was turning against the Japanese. Allied attacks on the airfield eventually caused the Japanese to give up hope of finishing the project and as a result the prisoners in Sandakan became a liability to their captors. They were systematically starved and so ill treated that hundreds died, but the final solution for the Japanese was to march these sick prisoners on an impossible journey to Ranau, through some of the worst jungle in the world. Of about 2,500 prisoners in Sandakan, only six men survived. The full story of Sandakan and the "death marches" is one of the worst atrocities of the Pacific War. But before the death marches occurred, the Japanese sought to break down the internal organisation in the prison camp by removing most of the officers. Perhaps this could be considered a fortunate thing for my father, for on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1943, he and the other Officers were shipped back to Kuching. He describes the trip including a mention of a stop at the island of Labuan in his diary. Little did he know then that this pretty island in the China Sea would be his last resting place.

The officers, including my father, arrived at Batu Lintang P.O.W. camp Kuching, at 11 am 26<sup>th</sup> August 1943. He kept the diary as current as possible until 6<sup>th</sup> April 1944, where his last entry referred to his 15<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary and my birthday. I do not know why he made no more entries in the diary after this date. There was still some space on the last page he had been using and I have found some other entries in another notebook that are dated about a month before his death. The diary was not found by the Japanese so the reason for it stopping at 06/04/1944 will remain an unsolved mystery. After reading the diary many times I feel that there is a perceptible change in my father's attitude in the entries of the last few months up to April 1944. I suppose this is to be expected considering the conditions of their confinement and deprivation. Beside the physical problems of life in that environment we have no conception of the emotional pressures. I cannot begin to understand how anyone could survive this treatment.

In February 1998 my wife, Colleen, and I visited Borneo. We were able to discover and visit Batu Lintang about 5 km south of Kuching where my father was imprisoned and died. We also stopped for a day on Labuan Island where we visited my father's grave at the Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery. He and thousands of other victims of war were identified and were reburied on Labuan. The official cause of my father's death was given to his next of kin as malnutrition and dysentery. He died on the 21<sup>st</sup> July 1945, two days before his 45<sup>th</sup> birthday and 24 days before the Japanese surrendered to end World War II.

Because the diary is the only document in existence that gives details of the events between May 1941 and April 1944, about my father's life, I now want to tell the story of the diary papers themselves. The "DIARY" consists of three sheets of very light weight paper about 160 mm x 215 mm. Three years of significant events in one man's life are written on these pages in the smallest writing you can imagine. Both sides of the paper were used and all of the writing is in ink. The diary had to be kept hidden from the Japanese throughout the period of confinement. It was an extremely serious offence to keep any records while a prisoner of the Japanese. The sheets of paper were always kept in the back of a shaving mirror owned by my father. They were only discovered some time after the end of the war by an English prisoner, from the same camp, who bought or had been given the mirror after my father's death. He recognised the sentimental significance of them and managed to get them to my mother soon after finding them.

When I set out on this project about my father's life, I thought I would write this introduction in less than a page. You can see that I have not (editor's note: original document was three pages). However I hope I have achieved one of the goals I set myself and that was to write the story to give the grandchildren of Vernon Hopetoun Smith the opportunity to know something about a man I called my father and a man I remember as a kind, loving and understanding person. I regret that I did not have long to know him but making this study of part of his life has been good for me.

# POW PROFILE



**Vernon Hopetoun  
SMITH  
Flying Officer No. 117114  
R.A.F.V.R.**

**BORN 23 JULY 1900  
AT COTTESLOE WESTERN AUSTRALIA**

**DIED 21 JULY 1945  
AT KUCHING P.O.W. CAMP BORNEO**

**Article Written by Brian Russell Smith  
(Edited from a larger article presented to his family)**

My parents married on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1929 in the Church of England Church at Leonard St Victoria Park W.A. My first sister, Pamela Joan, was born on 12<sup>th</sup> July 1930. My second sister, Daphne Alice, was born on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1932 and I was born on the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1934 (on my parent's 5<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary).

I have little knowledge of the years up to about 1940, except a few vague recollections of some of the events when we all lived at No 42 Surrey Rd Rivervale. In about 1940 my parents moved to a new house that they had built for them on the corner of Hubert St and Somerset St, East Victoria Park. The original house still stands today. My sisters and I grew up in this house.

From 1940-41 I still have some clear memories of my father during this period. There were many things to do around a newly built home. In those days you did it all yourself – no building “packages” with landscaping, paths and fences included. I can recall my father building stone walls to retain gardens around the areas that were to be planted with buffalo grass, laying concrete paths and putting up wooden paling fences. Looking back, I don't know where he got the time or the money to do so much. Restoration of an old wooden dining table and a set of matching chairs was something else I can remember. I'm sure there was much more I have forgotten.

But the last memory of my father is quite clear. I can still visualise him walking away from our house. He was in civilian clothing and carrying a “Gladstone” bag. I was standing at the front gate of 160 Hubert St as he walked away down Somerset Street towards Albany Highway to catch a tram. I have since assumed he was on his way to a collection centre, along with others like him who had already enlisted.

My father left Fremantle, Western Australia, on the 31<sup>st</sup> May 1941 in a ship of 6600 tons, called Zealandia. This ship was later sunk in Darwin harbour on the 19<sup>th</sup> February 1942 during a Japanese air raid. There were also hundreds of other volunteer servicemen on this ship heading for Malaya in 1941. During most of the voyage they were escorted by H.M.A.S. Sydney II. This ship was later sunk with the loss of every member of the crew, (645 men), on 19<sup>th</sup> November 1941. The sinking was somewhere off the W.A. coast, well out to sea from Geraldton.

Four weeks after her 34<sup>th</sup> birthday, my mother was left on her own to raise three children whose ages ranged from Pamela, almost 11, Daphne just 9 and myself 7. She must have had doubts, even then, that there was a possibility she would never see her husband again. Only in recent years have I started to understand a little of how difficult this must have been.

I now need to pause the story long enough to explain something about why my father ended up in the R.A.F.V.R. and not one of the Australian services. To the best of my knowledge, since the event, I believe he tried to join the R.A.A.F. to go to Malaya. The prospect of a Japanese invasion into Australia was even obvious in early 1941. I think he was rejected by the R.A.A.F. based on medical reasons (probably his eyesight as I know he wore strong glasses). What happened after this I don't know, but he succeeded in joining the English air force, the R.A.F., as Pilot Officer Vernon Hopetoun Smith, R.A.F.V.R. No. 117114.

From the time my father left Fremantle until the 6<sup>th</sup> April 1944, he kept a diary. The diary notes are very brief and often have big gaps between entry dates. He arrived in Malaya in early June 1941 and spent the first six months training. Most of this was in the northern state of Kedah at Alor Star and nearby towns.

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