

# The Borneo Bugle



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

June 1st 2006 Volume 4, Issue 5

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## RETURNED AND SERVICES LEAGUE OF AUSTRALIA 90<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY REMEMBRANCE AND CELEBRATION

by Allan Cresswell

On Sunday June 11 2006 a Service of Remembrance and Celebration to mark the 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of the Returned and Services League of Australia was conducted at Saint George's Cathedral Perth. The Management Committee of the Borneo POW Relatives Association of WA, and their partners, were all invited to the Service and were in attendance.

The Very Reverend Dr John Shepherd, Dean of Perth welcomed those present and Prayers, Readings, Hymns, Anthems, Address, Lament, Last Post/Reveille and Blessing were featured during the Service. The Address was by The Reverend Tim Harrison, Associate Priest of St George's Cathedral and the Readings by Mr William E Gaynor OAM, RFD and Sir Charles Court AK, KCMG, OBE.

On conclusion of the Service those present attended Anzac House for afternoon tea and a welcome address by Mr William Gaynor OAM RFD, State President Returned and Services League of WA (and Patron of our Association) was followed by an address by The Hon Bruce Billson MP, Minister for Veterans' Affairs.

Mr Gaynor has kindly allowed us to reproduce his address and it appears on **Page Two** of the *Borneo Bugle*.



**Borneo POW Relatives Association of WA Inc Management Committee and their partners opposite Saint George's Cathedral after Service on June 11 2006**  
From Left to Right: Margaret Jones, Margaret Douglas, Nola Jones, Colin Prior, Ken Jones, Keith Jones, Allan Cresswell, Bob Brackenbury, Jean Cresswell and Steffoni Brackenbury

Photo courtesy Gavan Reeve

## WELCOME ADDRESS - at Afternoon Tea ANZAC House on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2006

By Mr William Gaynor OAM, RFD

State President Returned and Services League of WA

Good Afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Let me firstly acknowledge our special guests

The Hon Bruce Billson MP Minister for Veteran Affairs and Mrs Kate Billson  
Sir Charles Court AK KCMG OBE and Lady Court,  
Service Chiefs in Western Australia,  
Mr Wayne Gregson, Deputy Commissioner (Operations) representing the Commissioner  
His Worship, The Mayor of the City of Stirling Cr Terry Tyzack and Mrs Tyzack  
Representatives of the Anglican and Catholic Church Arch Bishops  
Officers and members from Unit and Kindred Organizations  
Life Members and Members of the League  
And of course, all Guests and supporters of the League.

This month, 90 years ago in Melbourne the RSL, then known as The Returned Sailors and Soldiers Imperial League of Australia was founded so bringing together all Returned Soldiers Associations that had begun to emerge following the earlier battles of The Great European War.

At their first meeting our founding fathers established some key objectives for the operation of the newly formed league.

I want to draw your attention to those objectives as they have been the very corner-stone of our existence over the past ninety years.

They are

- Remembering those who did not return
- Maintaining bonds of friendship
- Caring for those needing assistance
- Arguing for a strong and capable defence force

Importantly

Promoting in our nation a sense of pride in being Australian and an understanding of the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship.

Particularly, in our young people there was a desire to engender respect for our democratic way of life and a commitment to serving our nation.

Returned Servicemen, I believe, clearly have a keen understanding of what sort of nation they have been fighting for- they also believed they had earned the right to comment on a range of social issues: while deciding from the outset to be apolitical.

In some respects, the RSL became the 'conscience of the nation'.

We find today that much has changed. We live in a totally different world. Australia has changed but the League's fundamental objectives remain – they are indeed enduring.

At various milestones the League has recognised its achievements and much has been recorded on those events.

Today we have participated in a Thanksgiving Service to honour all those who over the past 90 years have served their country, the League and the society in which we live.

And while we pay that tribute let us remember our honourable past and use it as a foundation for our future.

If our beliefs and objectives have created the strongest community based organization in Australia, then the RSL deserves a defining role in shaping the future Australia.

It is my pleasant duty to formally welcome the Hon Bruce Billson, Minister for Veteran Affairs to Western Australia – his first visit in his official capacity as Minister and invite him to address you.

## President's Corner

by President Allan Cresswell

Now that we only have three general meetings each year it is so important that we continue to utilise the *Borneo Bugle* newsletter to inform you, the members, of what events occur from time to time that are of interest and of benefit to our association. Likewise it is also so important that items from our members and associates continue to be received for inclusion in the *Borneo Bugle*. At each pre publication time we wonder how we will have sufficient articles to fill the newsletter but somehow items of interest continue to roll in. There are still many more stories, drawings, poems and items of interest yet to be discovered. Maybe you have something of interest about the Borneo POW Story that you have located or been told? Do let us know!

Since the last Bugle in April 2006 and the last meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup> 2006 there have been many functions and services conducted that have involved our Association. Most importantly was the ANZAC Day March conducted in Perth where our members marched under our banner. Turnout was identical in numbers to last year. Pleasing for me was that both my daughters marched and they held the banner throughout the march, under such windy and wet conditions. The weather turned bad just prior to our group's turn to march and we were saturated by the downpour that continued throughout the whole march. At the conclusion of the march the Esplanade Service was cancelled and I quickly took a group photograph which appears on **Page Five**.

Prior to the ANZAC Day March many of our members attended the 13 Field Squadron Karrakatta - ANZAC Dawn Service. I laid a wreath on behalf of our Association and individual private wreaths were also laid by our members. At the conclusion of the Dawn Service our Association members moved to the dedication wall where the Sandakan POW Honour Plaques are located and a short blessing service was conducted by the priest who had presided over the Dawn Service. Our members placed new poppies on the group and individual plaques. See **Page Five** for Dawn Service photographs.

Vice President, Bob Brackenbury, attends the United and Kindred meetings held regularly at ANZAC House where he gathers information about functions and events relevant to our Association. It was he who co-ordinated our involvement in the ANZAC Day March. A big thanks to Bob for his regular attendance at these meetings and for the dissemination of information about the March and other events.

Bob and Steffoni attended the annual Prisoners of War of the Japanese dinner meeting held on April 12 2006 in Mandurah. Every year they come back with notification of contact made with family members of Borneo POWs. Often these people are unaware of our existence and Bob always supplies contact details to them and passes their particulars onto Ken Jones or myself.

Steffoni and Bob also attended the Bakers Hill Primary School Pre ANZAC Day Service where Bill Young (NSW POW survivor of Sandakan) spoke by telephone to the assembly. The school has adopted Bill since his visit to their school in 2003 and after they were entertained by him at the Alexander State Library during the Sandakan Exhibition. Present also at the service was our member, friend and Borneo Veteran, Ben Hart together with Jack Sue of Z Special Unit.

On Friday June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2006 Ken Jones, Bob Brackenbury and myself attended The Ex-Prisoners of War Association Service at their memorial at Kings Park. Mount Lawley Senior High School conducted the Memorial Service and students participated by way of the organising, Student Address, Concert Band and School Choir. I laid a wreath on behalf of our Association. Photograph of the memorial and wreaths appear on **Page Five**. After the service we were informed that Arthur Leggett OAM (who is President of The Ex-POW Association of WA) had just published his autobiography, *Don't Cry For Me*. Arthur has been a great supporter of our association and was a guest speaker at our General Meeting some time ago. Arthur was captured in Crete and became a POW of the Germans for four and one half years. He just happened to have a few books on hand which were snapped up quickly by us all. A great life story by a great man!

The next General Meeting (and AGM) will be held in August with the date to be advised. Details will be published in the next Borneo Bugle which will be issued on August 1<sup>st</sup> 2006.

We wish Stef and Bob a safe trip to Canberra later this month to visit family. Also Trixie Sullivan is holidaying in the Eastern States and we wish her a great time away. Jodi Bavin and husband, Bob, are travelling to England in July for a long overdue holiday together.

## Vale John Stanley Shurmer

Sadly we must advise members of the recent death of John Shurmer after a long illness. John and Elizabeth (nee McKenzie) Shurmer were among the earliest members of our group and joined us more than six years ago.

We offer our sincere sympathy to Elizabeth at her tragic loss.

## NEW MEMBER

We are pleased to welcome a new member-

**Kay Morrison**, whose father was **Lieutenant John C Morrison** of the 2/4 Machine Gun Battalion who was interned at Sandakan and Kuching and repatriated to Australia at the end of WWII.

## FIRST REPORT OF BORNEO TRAGEDY IN WA?

By Keith Jones

Vic Tyrrell has kindly given us his collection of newspaper cuttings which he has gathered over time whenever an item about our POW's in Borneo appeared. These papers will now be kept by our Association for posterity.

Going through them recently I noticed a report in *The West Australian* dated March 7th 1992. This told of an elderly war widow living in Cottesloe who still did not know how her husband had died, only that he had passed away "cause not stated" in a POW camp called Sandakan in Borneo. She had then shown the reporter a newspaper clipping of an article referring to a massacre in Borneo, which she had kept since it appeared in 1945.

I felt that this article would likely be of interest to our members, so Nola did some research on it for me and located it in the press archives at the Battye library. It is reproduced below as published in *The West Australian* on 14/11/1945.

Was this the first public news of the Borneo tragedy in WA?

THE WEST AUSTRALIAN, WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 1945.

<p><b>ATTACK PRESSED.</b> BRITISH TROOPS ADVANCE. AIRCRAFT SHOT UP. JAPANESE GUNS USED.</p>	<p><b>TITO TRIUMPHS.</b> YUGOSLAV ELECTIONS. National Front's Big Majority.</p>	<p><b>A BLACK CHAPTER</b> BORNEO MASSACRES. SIX LEFT OF 1,800. JAPANESE AWAIT TRIAL.</p>
<p>LONDON, Nov 11.—Behind an artillery screen British and Indian troops today are pressing home their attack among the smoking ruins of the centre of Surabaya, says Reuters correspondent in Batavia. The centre of the city was hit last night from anti-aircraft fire and the sky was lit up with the glare of a Japanese ship which caught fire while a Japanese warship was being sunk. The Japanese aircraft are encountering unexpected opposition and heavy fire returning from their wounded and with bullets. The Indonesians have been machine-gunning, sniping and using hand-grenades and mortars.</p>	<p>In Belgrade 81 per cent of the electorate voted, of whom 81 per cent voted for National Front candidates. The respective figures in other places were as follows: Dubrovnik, 96 and 87; Siberski, 88 and 87; Split, 88 and 87; Tuzla, 88 and 87.</p> <p>The correspondent adds that the result is a triumph for the National Liberation Movement and will be interpreted as a vote against the post-war and all that went with it, including the King and politicians in exile.</p>	<p>LONDON, Nov 13.—British and Australian officers have discovered six men who are the only known survivors of 1,800 Allied war prisoners now known to have been murdered by the Japanese in Borneo, says the "Daily Mail" Singapore correspondent. It is the blackest atrocity of the Far East war. One party of Allied war prisoners was massacred only two months before the capitulation.</p> <p>The men were all killed in a series of "forced marches" through the jungles and mountains of central Borneo. They were in fact death marches clearly intended to kill all who took part in them. Starving, crippled and sick prisoners, men suffering from malaria, beriberi and dysentery were paraded and started off on a march across Borneo. None was spared. They were driven under the whiplash and at bayonet point. Japanese guards shot, bayoneted and beat them to death when they could not carry on and left the bodies to the jungle.</p> <p>Every one of the Japanese involved is now in British hands in Borneo, awaiting trial.</p>
<p>Arrived Indonesian being from Major-General Masoeng's Anglo-Indonesian troops are taking to the hills as the Fifth Indian Division closes in on the centre of Surabaya, which is now almost completely under Allied control, said the "Daily Mail" correspondent in Batavia last night. British casualties in the three days fighting were officially stated to have been "very light."</p> <p>Major-General Christensen's B.G. announced today that the bodies of two Japanese wearing Japanese uniforms had been found in an Indonesian border in Surabaya after the incident had been reported. "The bodies mentioned by the Indonesian are of Japanese standard and practice and there is little doubt that some Japanese are still actively engaged in the operations in Surabaya," he said.</p>	 <p>MARSHAL TITO</p>	<p><b>OUT OF SAIGON.</b> BRITISH ORDER. Japanese to Go.</p> <p>SAIGON, Nov 13.—The French commander in French Indo-China, Major-General Giroux, has ordered all Japanese to get out of Saigon by November 17.</p> <p>General Giroux said that a 100 per cent speed-up in disarmament was necessary. A few Japanese would be left in defensive positions in the French sector.</p> <p>Considerable quantities of arms and</p>
<p><b>JEW AND ARABS.</b></p>		

### The words in the newspaper article.....

LONDON Nov 13- British and Australian officers have discovered six men who are the only known survivors of 1,800 Allied war prisoners now known to have been murdered by the Japanese in Borneo, says the "Daily Mail's" Singapore Correspondent. It is the blackest atrocity of the Far East war. One party of Allied war prisoners was massacred only two months before the capitulation.

The men were all killed in a series of "forced marches" through the jungles and mountains of central Borneo. They were in fact death marches clearly intended to kill all who took part in them. Starving, crippled and sick prisoners, men suffering from malaria, beriberi and dysentery were paraded and started off on a march across Borneo. None was spared. They were driven under the whiplash and at bayonet point. Japanese guards shot, bayoneted and beat them to death when they could not carry on and left the bodies to the jungle.

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**ANZAC Day Dawn Service 2006 Irwin Barracks  
after placement of wreaths**



**Margaret Jones placing poppy on Sandakan POW  
Honour Plaque. Bob Brackenbury in foreground**



**A wet but proud group after completion of  
ANZAC Day March - Perth 2006**



**The Ex-Prisoners of War Association Memorial  
Kings Park 2006 after the Memorial Service**

All photos courtesy Allan Cresswell

## **WEB WILL BE A WINNER**

### **BORNEO: A PRISONERS OF WAR HISTORY**

At the April General Meeting, President Allan stated in his report that as the Sandakan Memorial was now a reality and the Exhibition was now housed at Fremantle we need a further project to continue with our aims and objectives. Allan put forward the idea of our Association having our own web site. He explained that it would cover all aspects of the Borneo Prisoners of War from before they enlisted eg. POW profiles to the relatives of the present day.

Allan will give fuller details in his article about the web project. He would also liaise with the authors of the many books that have been written on the subject seeking hitherto unpublished information.

The meeting unanimously endorsed the project and Allan is authorised to proceed. There will be a considerable amount of planning and preliminary work to be done and your Management Committee will be assisting Allan in any way possible in this very worthwhile project.

We are hopeful that you, the members will remain members and also give your support, particularly in providing family information of your serviceman. **A great idea, well done Allan!**

## OUR PROPOSED BORNEO WEBSITE

by Allan Cresswell

For the past twelve months thoughts have been circulating in my mind about the need to spread the word of our association's existence and the need to present the documents, photographs, stories and articles accumulated by many of us, to the general public. Not just to Western Australians and Australians, but to the World! Particularly to those in Britain, Borneo (Sarawak and Sabah) and perhaps even Japan. Many of whom know little about the POW story in Borneo, not even by the families effected. A direction was needed to continue to tell the Sandakan POW Story and also a way to hopefully acquire additional information that surely is still out there waiting for us to discover. Australians have been fortunate to have historians/authors with the likes of Lynette Silver, Kevin Smith, Don Wall and others. But that is not the case elsewhere and much of the information and research by them is still unknown to the general public.

Then the answer became obvious. Why not put all the information to hand up on a website. Something that can be shared. Not just something for our own generation but for our children and grandchildren. Initially I considered using my existing personal website to house the proposed collection but as was mentioned by Ken Jones to me during discussion, "This is something that needs to belong wholly to our association, not controlled by an individual". Yes he was right and so I put the proposal to our last general meeting that the development of website should be a new project for our association.....and those present at the meeting did agreed.

So I have commenced to "up" my skills in website development and am learning many new ways to enhance and present a site. But it all will take so much time to compile. Turning photos, sheets of paper and stories into electronic images is something that just does not happen overnight. One way to ease the mammoth task ahead is to break the site down into sections or categories and upload each section on completion and that does seem to be the way to go. I have initially divided the site into 24 sections but there is certain to be addition categories required as we progress.

Bill Young has kindly agreed to allow all his drawings, stories, poems and paintings to be displayed within the website and that is a mass of information alone to have available for our website. Bill knows the advantage of the internet as a way to assist in helping to keep the spirit of Sandakan alive. Bill has been telling the story to schools, at meetings and at numerous dedications and remembrances for many years. Let's help him to spread the story even further!

The nineteen POW stories already printed in the *Borneo Bugle* will be featured on the site and now is the time for others to expand that total by telling their own family story. Additionally we will feature stories on the civilian heroes, nominal rolls of those who died, details of our association, data ex Bill Young, maps, photos, stories on the various camps throughout Borneo, links to other associated websites, research information, the personal pilgrimages back to Borneo, details on the various memorials, information on Labuan Island graves and panels and so much more.

So as to keep you informed on a regular basis as to progress made or information sought we invite everyone who has an email address to provide it to me. It will not be distributed and remain personal between us. If you don't have an email address but have family or friends who do, let me know so I can forward the details to them. Additionally by the time of the next *Borneo Bugle* we hope to have the beginnings of the website up and running and will be able to provide a website pathname (URL).

For those of our members not into the world of computers, internet and websites do appreciate that this project may not appear to benefit you personally but you can easily view the resulting site at family or friends homes. Plus it is an ideal way for them to become aware of your interest in the stories behind the sacrifices made by our servicemen. It will remain a personal perpetual tribute to our servicemen!

Any contribution or assistance by our members to this project will be appreciated. It is all very exciting!

## HONOUR PLAQUES DEDICATION SERVICE – KINGS PARK

by Ken Jones

On Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2006 nine Honour Plaques will be dedicated in Marri Walk, Kings Park. Three of them will be honouring relatives of our members; Colin and Frank Prior's father, Craftsman Leslie Prior of 2/10 Ordnance Corps; Laura Anderson's brother and Betty Matthew's uncle, Private William H. Earnshaw of 2/4<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion; and John Oldfield's uncle by marriage, Private Alfred P Girdlestone of 2/11 Battalion.

The first two will be placed beside existing plaques of two of our member's relatives.

The Service commences at 10.30am and our members will be most welcome to attend.

## BOYUP BROOK MEMORIAL WESTERN AUSTRALIA

by Allan Cresswell

Part 4 of our ongoing articles re various Borneo Memorials throughout Australia and Borneo (Sabah and Sarawak)

In 1991, Ted McLaughlin, an ex-POW of the Japanese and a resident of Boyup Brook in Western Australia erected a memorial in Boyup Brook in memory of three of his friends who had died at Sandakan, and to all those who had perished in Borneo. To Ted's surprise, over 200 people turned up, many from hundreds of kilometres away, for the dedication of the memorial. Boyup Brook was the first place in Australia to erect a Sandakan Memorial. In September 1993, over 300 came to Boyup Brook for a Sandakan Memorial Service. This led to the erection and dedication of an even larger memorial on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1994. Its centrepiece is the original Memorial erected by Mr E. McLaughlin in 1991. This memorial now contains the names of all those Western Australian soldiers who had died at Sandakan.



### **Location:**

Behind Shire Council Offices at Boyup Brook Western Australia

### **Description:**

Granite plinth on four shaped, sawn granite bases. There are four bronze name panels at the base and a bronze panel on top of the granite centerpiece.

### **Inscription:**

1942 to 1945

This memorial commemorates the 2000 Australians who died as Prisoners of the Japanese at Sandakan Camp, and on the Death March to Ranau in North Borneo during 1944 to 1945. Of the 2500 Australian and British P.O.W in Sandakan only 6 survived.

Recorded are the names of the 130 West Australian POWs who died in Borneo.

On the plaque is a map of the South China Sea area, showing where these acts took place, covering Borneo, North Borneo and Labuan Areas.

A Remembrance Service is held at Boyup Brook on the second Tuesday in September every year.

Both the Shire of Boyup Brook and the Boyup Brook Lions Club support the concept of the Annual Sandakan Remembrance Service. Lion Grant Wardle of Boyup Brook has been co-ordinating this service for many years. Grant and his small band of helpers are to be commended for the ongoing effort in ensuring this Annual Sandakan Remembrance Service continues. Well done Grant.

## Prologue on the Sandakan Remembrance Ceremony

Our members, Colin Prior and partner Margaret Douglas, drove to Melbourne and Canberra last month. They had planned to stay five days with friends at Canberra visiting the Australian War Memorial and other places of interest. On the first day Colin went to the AWM and was taken to the Sandakan Section by a tour guide. The guide happened to mention that the Sandakan Remembrance Ceremony was to be held the following Sunday in Canberra, which they were unaware of.

Colin and Margaret revised their plans so they could remain in Canberra for the ceremony. Both have since advised that the ceremony turned out to be such a special occasion for everyone there. Our friend, Bill Young, gave the Commemorative Address. His address is included below. At the end of his address Bill commenced to sing the POW song that he mentions in his speech. There were very few dry eyes around after his rendition. A wonderful, inspiring and overwhelming occasion. After Bill had given his speech the next speaker just made a simple and spontaneous but so true a statement about Bill....."What a remarkable man"! Later Colin had a chance to briefly speak to Bill but by this time numerous dignitaries were gathering around.

Colin and Margaret were also impressed by the Canberra Men's Choir who sang beautiful renditions of Amazing Grace and Psalm 23. The Catafalque Party were just so precise, and their progress up the AWM stairs to the Shrine of Remembrance and to the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was so moving.

Then to top it all off Colin and Margaret were visited by Lynette and Neil Silver whilst in Canberra. Lynette became aware of the West Aussies being in Canberra and had re-routed their pre planned journey to Victoria via Canberra to again meet them.

## *Sandakan Remembrance Ceremony- Canberra- May 28th. 2006*

Commemorative Address By Bill Young

*You cannot tell a battlefield / Once the dead are buried / Once the birds return again / Once the flowers bloom / And once time absorbs the pain.*

It is almost 64 years now, since B Force set off for Borneo in that old tub of a ship, the Obi Maru; And now here, it's been 64 years of absorbing the pain; of keeping the memories alive and well; of keeping the line between the past and the future, open –

*For the past is all there is - for the future.*

Thank you for attending this Sandakan Remembrance Ceremony, in doing so, you are helping in keeping this, our sacred past, alive.

Memories are the "Titbits" that we have gathered from off yesterday's table, and always providing we preserve them well, they will lend enough sustenance to assist us in sustaining the day, and, with just a little foresight on our part, they will go on towards helping- in shaping our tomorrow.

One of my well preserved titbits, coming from out of those long ago days in Borneo, is of a group of us singing the song, Yesterday; "Oh what a day was yesterday" We sang along, harmonizing- all together one at a time enjoying the moment, while never realizing just how few yesterdays were left, for almost everyone there in the camp.

*"Oh, what a day, was yesterday, for yesterday, gave me you"*

Yet another of the scraps taken from off that same table, tells of a very early morning assembly, in the camp at Sandakan, it was up there by that, Eiffel Tower of the Jungle, the Big Tree, where, with the Jap brass standing close by in attendance, our Colonel is up on a box podium, reading to us from a form. It is an insidious thing, saying in effect, that whoever signed it, was thereby in agreement with the order, that whoever tried to escape, was to be shot.

Continued Page 9



**Continued from Page 8**

It was then that the Colonel showed us the majesty of contemptible disobedience, as with a disdainful sweep of his arm, he threw the paper at the feet of Captain Hoshijima, while declaring in a clear ringing voice, "I for one - will not sign this".

Well! To say we were surprised, wouldn't do the occasion justice. You could have knocked us over with the proverbial feather, for none of us had expected this show of bravado, not from our quiet little Colonel, he who hardly ever said a word. Besides, he wasn't even Infantry! He was just a Gunna, an Artilleryman.

The reaction was electric; with ripples of movement from the Jap soldiers, and screams of anger from their brass. My word, weren't they upset at this threatened loss of Face; and hadn't the Colonel's action brought a hairy moment - down upon us.

Within seconds they'd dragged the Colonel out, over by the gate, and shoved him in front of a firing squad. And in all this confusion, Colonel Walsh was the only man there, who'd remained calm, and to me, a mere youth, he showed during that moment of panic, just how a good Officer performed his duty.

They never did get around to shooting the Colonel, and after much haggling back and forth, with our Officers shouting, and pushing, and with Captain Hoshijima jumping up and down, livid, and fit to burst; why! Let me tell you, things didn't look too good at all.

Yet for all that, it was the Japs who were faced down; it was them who changed the wording of the form; so we signed it, and went about the business of trying to stay alive. At least no one up there, ever died of boredom.

It was a time when the camp had settled down to days of grinding work at the airfield, and of nights in the camp, relaxing, thinking of home, or of enjoying the choir, the concerts, and the excitement coming from the camp's several exhibitions of boxing and wrestling.

I have a copy of the Unit Rolls, kept by Lt. Col. A. W. Walsh. Typed on old Naval Message Forms, they hold the names of every member of B Force. The cover bears the Colonel's signature, together with his Army number (VX 40155) and whenever I take these files out, I see the names of all those dear honorable men, and I see the Colonel at his moment of defiance.

It was such a privilege knowing so many of those brave and kindly men; and to learn from them. In my mind, and in my heart, they are still young, while it is I who have grown old, and as I finish relating these two small offerings, from out of Borneo long ago, I can only hope that the memory of all those who perished up there in the camp at Sandakan, on the track to Ranau, and all the way down to the town of Kuching - will live on and on, into countless Yesterdays.

**"Oh what a day, was yesterday, for yesterday, gave me you"**

**Photos of the Ceremony at Canberra are on Page 10**



**Bill Young giving his Commemorative Address**  
Photo courtesy Bill Young



**Wreaths at the Sandakan Remembrance Ceremony at the Australian War Memorial in Canberra held 28 June 2006**  
Photo courtesy Bill Young

## A HOME TOWN TALE

by Keith Jones

*During World War Two there were many quiet little country towns in Australia which boomed because of the presence of large defence force camps set up close by. Our servicemen from those camps were happy to buy home cooking and many amenities which the towns could provide, and the local young ladies suddenly found themselves in a paradise where they were never short of dancing partners.*

*I was then a small boy growing up in one such town. Legends were made there and handed down..... to be retold many years later, after the players had all long gone. This is a little extract from a perhaps typical home town story.*

During the latter years of world war two the town was overrun by soldiers from a very large military camp which was set up in the bush just nearby. This created a problem for the young lads in the town because the local young ladies were then very much in demand with the soldiers. It followed that this gave rise to some age old friction between the soldiers and the local lads. There were some pretty wild boys on both sides in this, and they took great delight in setting each other up to harass their competition.

There was a small cafe beside the road out of town on the way back to the camp, and across the road from the cafe stood several tall pine trees. It became the trick of certain of the local young blokes to climb high up in the pine trees at night to wait for a group of soldiers to walk past, preferably those who might have had something of a skinful from an evening out on leave. The troops would usually come along singing mournfully or raucously, as the mood took them at the time. Then, as they unwittingly approached the cafe, the young lads up in the trees would let loose with a barrage of pine cones pelted over onto its corrugated iron roof.

Now it was a fact that the cafe owner had a very short fuse, and this racket over his head would never miss bring him out the front door at full bellow to find out who had caused it. There he would spot the nearby soldiers and start yelling accusations at them in head on confrontation. They, being a bit volatile themselves because of the singing syrup, would soon start bellowing back, and it would go on from there.

The scene would usually end with one side or the other slinging curses in retreat. Or the military police would arrive before this and can the soldiers anyway, despite their protests that they knew nothing about anybody chucking things on the roof of the flaming cafe. A few nights would pass peacefully, and then the local boys would repeat the whole procedure with a fresh unsuspecting group of soldiers. This went on successfully for quite some time, until finally the troops clued on and started pelting handfuls of hard hitting rocks up into the pine trees whenever they passed by at night.

Saturday night dances in the town hall were very popular. But of course the place was jammed to the roof with soldiers, which meant that the local young lads had less than a dog's chance of getting inside to get even a sniff at the local girls.

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On one particular Saturday night, after this one sided competition had been going on for just too long, some unidentified character figured out a trick which would smartly remove the troops from the scene. The dancing in the crowded hall was going on in full swing to the music of the local band. Suddenly a brown candle-like object was thrown upwards through the door and it sailed high over the crowd to drop right in the middle of the sawdust covered floor.

The characters who were dancing closest to this immediately spotted it as a stick of gelignite explosive with a burning fuse attached, and they promptly took off for the nearest exit. This started the anticipated chain reaction which, it was said later, looked to outside observers as though the hall had become a huge popcorn box which literally popped.

Soldiers shot out through every door and window and crack in the walls. They appeared about ten at a time in either vertical or horizontal clumps through spaces where normally just one would fit, with the local girls sandwiched between them and squealing blue murder in the high speed exit. The hall emptied at last and the dust of departing feet finally settled, but the expected big bang never came.

Somebody cautiously figured out later that the burning fuse had never been fitted with a detonator, so there was therefore no way that the gelignite could have exploded. It was virtually as harmless as a candle. But nobody in the town ever owned up to this one.

The final act in a long succession of incidents between local boys and the army was unbeatable. Nobody ever topped it, but a couple of lads did get canned for it after the event.

There was a busy railway station in the town. This had a few toilets at either end for the ladies and the gents, but these couldn't cope with the hundreds of soldiers who might arrive or leave on the troop trains passing through during those years. The army was prepared for this and at such times their ever versatile hessian screens would be pressed into service. A large open area beside the railway tracks would be utilized to establish a temporary loo, with dozens of portable steel dunny pans enclosed within a maze of high hessian walls.

Our local lads watched with great interest all one afternoon as a group of soldiers worked to erect one such loo. This was to serve the needs of a troop train which was due to pass through early the next morning. That night the lads quietly borrowed a very long and heavy rope from the army stores area nearby, then went to work in the deserted loo. They threaded one end of the rope through the handles of all the dunny pans in the place, and then sat back and waited patiently in the darkness until a train arrived at the station.

You guessed it. When a west bound train stopped for a while, they tied the other end of the rope to the rear coupling on the train. The rest is history. The train did pull out, followed shortly after by the entire military loo complete with hessian screens, fence posts, dunny pans and all. The station master heard the metallic din, but couldn't believe his eyes at what he saw looming up out of the dark behind the train he had just waved off.

It all got sorted out eventually. The train was pulled up a short distance down the track, and the army was hauled out of bed to explain why they were shifting a large temporary field toilet in the dead of night in this very unusual manner. Then they had to put it all back up again. Although it never did look quite the same after the trip.

All in all, the townsfolk and the army had a great time together. But the years soon passed away and that era of life came quietly to a close. The war ended and the soldiers finally marched cheerfully onto the trains which took them back to their homes all over the country. The vast camp of tents which had housed them was rolled up and carted away, and the bush slowly grew back over all the paths and roadways and drains where they had been.

In a far corner of the deserted campsite there was a little rectangular patch of clean yellow sand surrounded by whitewashed stones, which remained untouched for many years after. This was the simple marker of the place where a soldier was killed one night as he slept in his tent, when he was crushed by the fall of a heavy jarrah tree branch blown off in a winter storm. But time and the scrub claimed this spot eventually and it disappeared beneath the restoring undergrowth.

In the end a newcomer bought the land in the area and cleared all the bush from it, never knowing that the little patch of sand ever existed, or why it was there.



# POW PROFILE



**Herbert Dorizzi**  
**Private WX7997**  
**2/4<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun**  
**Battalion**



**Gordon Dorizzi**  
**Private WX9274**  
**2/4<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun**  
**Battalion**



**Thomas Henry Dorizzi**  
**Private WX12884**  
**2/4<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun**  
**Battalion**

**Article compiled by Non Meston following conversations with Niece Diane Edmonds and Nephew Bernard Dorizzi**

## THE DORIZZI BROTHERS

The Dorizzi family were long term residents of Toodyay. In 1929 they were the last family to live in the old Toodyay Gaol, where Tom and Mary lived in the main building and their five sons in the cells behind. This was a comfortable home with rose gardens and vines growing over a trellis at the front. There was a big kitchen to accommodate traditional cooking as well as the home curing of bacon. They lived well.

The family owned a woodyard adjacent to the gaol, and in the 1930s established a cartage and contracting business known as T Dorizzi and Sons in which all five sons worked. They built it up over ten years to include as well as collecting the whitegum which was sawn into blocks for firewood, general cartage, the sanitary contract and the school bus run.

They were popular and lived a very active life, as Wally Chitty says in his book 'as schoolboys, (we) did the usual things of playing fox and hounds, chasing rabbits, riding hill trolleys and playing football' as well as hunting gilgies in the local streams. Tom kept a horse in the police stable as a teenager, and joined the 10<sup>th</sup> Light Horse. They were gregarious and enjoyed a rich and varied life.

As young adults they were prominent in the football and swimming clubs, the fire brigade and were keen on whippet racing as well as all of the usual social activities of the town. Tom married a local girl, Nellie Smith and had a daughter Geraldine whom they called 'Tiddles', Bert had a steady girlfriend but Gordon was still unattached.

When war broke out the business, like many at that time in country areas, was under stress, and the three brothers, Tom, Gordon and Bert were working away from home with their trucks on contracts carting gravel for Main Roads in Nungarin. All three enlisted from there into the 2/4 Machine Gun Regiment, as did Reg Ferguson, another Toodyay man who also died as a POW in Borneo.

All four were in the first march. Herbert and Gordon died on the same day, February 11<sup>th</sup> 1945 on the track, and Tom a month later on March 11<sup>th</sup> after reaching Ranau. Reg Ferguson also reached Ranau and died on 23<sup>rd</sup> March, apparently on rice carrying duty.

Diane Edmonds and Bernard Dorizzi, whose father was Edgar, the eldest of the five brothers have shared the family's memories of their uncles. Diane remembers that Tom attended the wedding of local man Michael Robinson while on pre-embarkation leave and presented him with ten pounds – a very generous sum in those days. Their grandparents did not stay in Toodyay after the war, which added to the town's sense of loss.

The Dorizzi Memorial Cell was set up in 1997 in honour of all four men in the Old Newcastle Gaol Museum in Toodyay where they lived as boys. They are not forgotten.