

Sandakan POW Families Newsletter May 2015

National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association Australia Inc
Box 670 Jamison Centre ACT 2614

Patrons: June Healy OAM and Bill Young OAM.

The Sandakan POW Families newsletter and other news can now be found on the NMBVAA Site at www.nmbvaa.org.au. The NMBVAA sponsors the Sandakan Commemoration at the Australian War Memorial.

Get your booking and payment in now!

National Sandakan Day on 28 and 29 May 2015

Get your booking in now for the to National Sandakan Day events in Canberra on 28 and 29 May 2015. We have had lots of interest already.

CHANGE OF VENUE: there has been a change to the dinner venue – this will now be at the beautiful Hotel Mercure in Braddon, Canberra.

Please note: the dinner will be is a cash bar for drinks If you have any special dietary requirements (e.g. vegetarian, allergic to nuts etc) please advise us ASAP. Further details, including information on all events, are on Page 2.

Medals

If you like, you can wear military miniature medals at the dinner at Hotel Mercure on 28 May, and full-sized medals at the church service and at the Australian War Memorial wreath laying ceremony on 29 May 2015.

You may like to bring along personal mementos (for example, photos, postcards, letters) of your Sandakan relative or friend. These will be displayed on a table at the dinner on the 28 May 2015 at the Mecure.

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Members of the Canberra Sandakan Organising Committee 2015

Eric McDonald: Chair
Karin O’Shannessy: Secretary
Rev Mick O’Donnell: Chaplain
Ian Davenport: National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association
Betty Mills: Woden Valley RSL Sub Branch
Jenna Lobb

National Sandakan Day 28 and 29 May 2015

The Sandakan PoW Families will host a range of events in **Canberra** on **28 and 29 May 2015** to commemorate National Sandakan Day.

Program of events

Day	Time	Event	Location, Details
Thursday 28 May	2.00pm	Tour of Royal Military College Duntroon, including the Changi Chapel. Meet at Officers Mess, Duntroon House . * TO BE CONFIRMED , subject to the Duntroon Society voluntee availability. List members will be advised of this event in the next few days*	Royal Military College, Duntroon (To be confirmed)
	6.30 pm for 7.00pm	Dinner at the Mercure Hotel, Braddon (Oration presented by Professor Joan Beaumont, Australian National University) (Note: this will be a cash bar) *Please advise ASAP if you have any special dietary requirements. **Military medal (miniatures) optional.	Cnr Ainslie Avenue & Limestone Avenue, Braddon
Friday 29 May	10.00am	Sandakan Memorial Service at All Saints' Church: features Motet Choir, Combined Canberra Grammar Schools * Full military medals optional	All Saints' Church, 9-15 Cowper Street, Ainslie
	11.00am	Morning Tea	All Saints' Church Hall
	11.30am	World Premiere: Larry Sitsky's Piano Trio No.10 'Sandakan' Performed by the Press, Play Trio from Melbourne	All Saints' Church
	12.30pm	Lunch at Australian War Memorial (AWM) (at own expense)	AWM, Treloar Crescent Campbell
	1.45pm	Sandakan Wreathlaying Ceremony at AWM *Full military medals optional	AWM, Treloar Crescent Campbell
	3.30pm	Tour of AWM	AWM
	5.00pm	Last Post ceremony at AWM, commemorating Lieutenant Daniel Galton, died Borneo 12 July 1945: AWM event	AWM

How to pay – please see over the page.....

How to RSVP and make payment:

If you wish to attend the National Sandakan Day commemorative activities, the cost is **\$75 per person**. This total cost covers the activities over the two days of National Sandakan Day events, with the exception of lunch at the Australian War Memorial on 29 May 2015. This meal will be at attendees own expense.

RSVP details:

Please RSVP to Karin at kazzahoppe@gmail.com **by 20 May 2015**, indicating which events you will be attending. Please call Karin on 0434629847 or Eric on 0428 494644 if you have any questions.

Payment:

By Cheque or money order - Cheques and Money Orders **MUST** be made payable to NMBVAA NSW/ACT by **20 May 2015**. Please address envelopes to:

**Sandakan Ceremony
C/o NMBVAA ACT/NSW
PO Box 670
Jamison Centre ACT 2614**

By Funds Transfer - You can also choose to transfer funds to the following (NMBVAA ACT/NSW Account):

**BSB: 801 009
Account Number: 1059031**

PLEASE NOTE: If you use the Funds Transfer option, please notify the NMBVAA that you have paid by Funds Transfer and reference your name and contact Ian Davenport (NMBVAA) at maindav@bigpond.com at the completion of the transaction.

IMPORTANT: For planning purposes, all payments need to be received by 20 May 2015, thank you.

Accommodation suggestion:

The Mercure Hotel

Address: corner of Ainslie and Limestone Avenues, Braddon.

Costs: \$150 per standard room (20% discount off standard room rate for Sandakan POW Families).

Reservations telephone number: 02 6243 0000

PLEASE NOTE:

- For discount, please state Room Booking code: SAN 280515
- You must book by **Friday 20 May** to receive the discount.



The Mercure Hotel is in central Canberra and within walking distance of All Saints Church, Ainslie, and the Australian War Memorial.



Rev Mick O'Donnell, Chaplain to the Canberra Sandakan Organising Committee 2015

The Organising Committee is very pleased to welcome the very experienced and talented Rev Mick O'Donnell as our chaplain for the 2015 Sandakan Commemoration. Mick will be performing a very important role in our activities this year – from the Dinner, the Memorial Service at All Saints Church, to the Wreathlaying Service at the Australian War Memorial.

Rev Mick was educated at Maitland Marist Brothers College. He was awarded a BTheology from Sydney College of Divinity, and MA in Theology from the Australian Catholic University. In 1991 Mick was ordained as a married Deacon at St Christopher's Cathedral, Canberra. He has been married to Cora for 50 years and has three married children with 11 grandchildren.

Mick is a veteran of the Vietnam War and the Indonesian Confrontation conflict. He was chaplain to the Australian Federal Police International Deployment Group until 2009 and travelled widely to PNG, Solomon Islands, East Timor and Indonesia. At the moment he is a serving deacon at St Christopher's and is chaplain to Woden Valley RSL sub branch.

In his spare time, Mick is a radio presenter at Artsound and an author of two historical/crime fiction novels. For more details about his publications visit: www.mickodonnellonline.com He has other hobbies, such as restoring WW11 jeeps – one which you may see during this year's commemorations.

(Mick sitting pretty in his jeep 'Betty')





**Sandakan Memorial Service, All Saints' Church,
10am, Friday 29 May 2015.**

All Saints' Church, which is a partner with the Sandakan Organising Committee and Canberra Grammar Schools music departments in arranging the Sandakan Memorial Service, has a new Rector, the Reverend Lynda McMinn (photo). Reverend McMinn replaced the previous Rector Dr Colin Dundon in April this year.

On behalf of the Organising Committee, Betty Mills and Reverend Mick O'Donnell have been liaising with Rev McMinn and Dr Terry Norman, All Saints music director, and Melinda Sawers, Director of Music, Canberra Girls Grammar School, about the order of service. This event will be one of the highlights of the Canberra Sandakan commemorations.

The Memorial Service features the Motet Choir, Combined Canberra Grammar Schools, conducted by Melinda. Dr Norman will perform an Organ Prelude and piper Jennifer Hamer will perform 'Highland Cathedral'.



Value of Being on the World Wide Web

This year the Sandakan PoW Families organising Committee decided to put our material on the Web. Given that the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association (NMBVAA) have a web presence, Karin O'Shannessy and Ian Davenport arranged to put our newsletter and other material on a Sandakan page of the NMBVAA site.

This had an early and interesting response. A Mr Christopher Elliott from London wrote to the NMBVAA post box in early April. Apparently his daughter had discovered our page on the 'Net.

Mr Elliott is a relative of a British POW who died in the Death Marches. Mr Elliott is an interesting man. In 1955 he privately published an account on Sandakan tragedy called '*In the Shadow of Kinabalu*'. Many of the Australian writers on Sandakan such as Don Wall, Lynette Silver and Paul Ham have sourced his book as reference material and in some cases have met with him.

Mr Elliott is 86 years old but this did not stop him for attending the Ranau commemoration ceremonies in Sabah held late April/early May this year.

We have been trying to contact British Sandakan families through the Imperial War Museum and the UK Defence departments for British families for over 5 years to no avail. If any reader has contact with any British Sandakan families please let us know.

You can find Sandakan PoW Families newsletters and information on the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association at the NMBVAA site at <http://www.nmbvaa.org.au>.



Vale Tom Uren 28 May 1921-26 January 2015: A Personal Account



One of my cherished possessions is Tom Uren's autobiography 'Straight Left' which he gave to me with the notation, 'With warmest comradely regards'. As the title of his autobiography suggests, he was an indefatigable man of the old style Left. There is also in the title, of course, an allusion to his former life as a boxer.

What brought Tom and I together was not politics - he and I would have perhaps been on opposite sides of the barricades come the revolution – but his championing, as an ex-PoW himself, of the cause of Australian ex-Prisoners of War, especially as they aged. I was working on aged care needs of veterans during this time, with a special interest in ex-PoWs triggered by my commitment to Sandakan commemoration, and to the memory of an uncle who died as a PoW there.

Tom had been a Minister in the Whitlam Government, but his political influence with Governments, both Coalition and ALP, particularly in respect of ex-PoWs, extended right up to the time of his death. Tom was a great friend of Paul Keating. Indeed, they campaigned very successfully together to preserve the Sydney Harbour foreshores. Tom's home in Balmain has splendour views of the harbour, except for the rusting remnants of an oil refinery across the bay, which one day will be replaced by a harbour side park. Thanks to Tom.

When I visited him a number of times at his home on a Friday, Tom's day for holding court, he would proudly point out the bedroom where another visiting mate, Jim Cairns, used to sleep.

It was only appropriate that I asked him to be the Sandakan Families first Principal Patron, which he was very happy to accept. As a result of his own frailty he was unable to attend our commemorative events in Canberra, but he maintained a lively interest in our affairs.

Tom Uren will be hard to replace. I will miss him.

Eric McDonald



World Premiere: Larry Sitsky's Piano Trio No.10 'Sandakan' performed by the 'Press, Play' Trio from Melbourne at All Saints' Church, Ainslie 11.30 am 29 May 2015

I approached Professor Sitsky over two years ago at the Australian National University (ANU) to ask him to compose a serious classical piece, a piano trio, to be launched as part of the 70th anniversary of the last Sandakan Death March to be commemorated on 29 May 2015 in Canberra. I felt that there had been a couple of light pieces and a band piece on Sandakan, but nothing for piano trio, which is my favourite musical vehicle to express great emotion. I said to Larry I wanted a work which my grand children might listen to at a concert at Lincoln Centre, New York, in 50 years time.

Things were up and down for a while but late last year 'Press, Play', a piano trio from Melbourne, approached Larry separately for a serious composition. 'Press, Play' consists of piano, flute and percussion. This is a combination of instruments ideal for dealing with a war theme. The planets and the muses were in harmony. The project was a goer.

Professor Sitsky is a remarkable man, one of the foremost composers for piano in Australia. He is, as Heide Smith has said of him, a national and international figure who has been a powerful force in Australia's contemporary cultural life. Sitsky has composed for a wide range of musical forms, including 9 piano trios. 'Sandakan' is his 10th.

For Larry, 'Music to me is a mystic experience... I like to think of it as a kind of door opening to another dimension which is beyond our everyday world. Music has such incredible power'.

Unfortunately Larry is away in France until early June. So he will miss the premiere of the Trio.

'Press, Play' trio

'Press, Play' consists of Lina Andonovska: flute; Sonya Lifschitz: piano; and Dan Richardson: guest percussion.

Fuelled by an immense respect for each others' artistry and a kindred musical/creative vision, pianist Sonya Lifschitz and flutist Lina Andonovska come together to create a tour de force in the interpretation of contemporary chamber music by some of today's most innovative, exciting, and imaginative musical voices working both in Australia and abroad.

Lina is a graduate of the ANU School of Music and Larry Sitsky supervised her Honors studies.

Dan Richardson is a versatile freelance percussionist based in Melbourne. A regular week might see him performing as a guest of Orchestra Victoria, 3 Shades Black, Gamelan DanAnda, or Syzygy Ensemble, or fulfilling his more permanent roles as the drummer/percussionist for the Serbian folk ensemble Anja and Zlatna, the exotica chamber orchestra Slide Night, or the rock band Leadlight. This occasion marks Dan's first performance in Canberra since 2003, when he attended a national percussion symposium at ANU.

Eric McDonald