



## WHO WAS KEITH CARNABY?

Keith Carnaby, was an amateur entomologist, and the first baby boy to be born in Nedlands in 1910. Most of his childhood was spent roaming the bush around the Nedlands and Claremont area with his five brothers. By the time he was 12, he had quite a good collection of jewel beetles and had even made wooden boxes to put them in. It was this early experience with beetles that lead to a life long interest in the little creatures.

At the tender age of four he was seconded to be a pupil at the new Nedlands School. This was to make up the minimum number of ten students required to open a new school. He left school at the age of thirteen and continued to live in the area working with his father and elder brother in the family boat building business. With the onset of the depression in 1928, the work in the boatshed diminished and he was forced to work on another brother's farm at Lake Grace. It was here that his already impressive accumulation of jewel beetles grew into a large collection.

He spent nearly six years in the Army (1940 – 1946) during WWII serving as a tank driver in the Battle of El Alamein and as a commando in Borneo. The next twenty two years were at Chidnows where he and his wife, Jean, raised their three children. During this time of hardship and long hours, his beloved beetles took a back seat because of work and family commitments. When Jean died, her long-time best friend Edith Guy of Boyup Brook took on the role of caring for the family and so Keith became a Boyup Brook identity. Edith was widowed around the same time and in due course Keith and Edith were wed.

## COLLECTIONS

# The Keith Carnaby Collection

BOYUP BROOK



You're absolutely welcome



## WHY IS THE COLLECTION SIGNIFICANT?

In 1979, the 'Carnaby Collection of Beetles and Butterflies' was installed at the Visitor Centre in the town of Boyup Brook, WA, to lessen the ever increasing number of visitors to the family farm at Wilga. As one walks through the door of the room which houses the collection, on the left hand side are the real jewel beetles. The majority of these have been gathered in Western Australia. It is said that his collection is one of the most important in the world, second only to that at the British Museum of Natural History.

## HOW DID THE COLLECTION COME TOGETHER?

Keith's memories and enthusiasm for entomology were rekindled in the move to Boyup Brook and his retirement in 1968. This was partly due to Edith, who was also interested in entomology. It was from this dual passion that the dream of a book on the subject emerged. Together, they travelled around Australia five times and criss-crossed Western Australia in every direction hunting the elusive Jewel Beetle, ever mindful of the delicate ecology of this wonderful country.

Each time a new species or specimen was found it was tabulated, studied and photographed. Keith did the developing and printing himself to get the best correct colouring of the beetles. It is said that he had a natural gift for finding jewel beetles, constantly being aware of the climatic conditions in which they would hatch. In 1972, to house the now very extensive collection of insects, beetles and other species, a separate brick, a climate controlled building was erected on their farm, with the help of his son-in-law Frank and other members of the family.

## KEITH CARNABY'S BOOK

In 1980 Keith wrote a book – Jewel Beetles of Western Australia (Direct Colour Printers, Leederville, WA). He wrote this for amateur entomologists and schools so that they would be able to identify what they see in the bush.

Keith passed away in April 1994 and later his entire collection from the farm was presented to the CSIRO, housed in Canberra and not available for public viewing. As a result, the display here in Boyup Brook is unique and the only place that any part of the collection is on exhibit in Australia.

The Boyup Brook Tourism Association would like to thank Iain and Elizabeth Parker, for curating the Carnaby Collection.



Keith's extensive knowledge and accumulation of specimens was respected by entomologists world-wide. International Museums keenly sort the highly valued jewel beetles. He bred many of the butterflies himself and swapped boxes of beetles for colourful butterflies and moths also housed at the Tourist Centre.

## JEWEL BEETLES (BUPRESTIDAE)



**BUPRESTIDEA**  
**Melobasis**  
**carnabyi**  
**Coral Bay**

The scientific name of this family of beetles is Buprestidae. There are 12 families of Buprestidae in the world; 6 are represented in Australia and one, Stigmodera, is restricted to Australia. There are about 350 species of Stigmodera found and they range in size from less than 2mm up to nearly 7cm.

Of the 900 known and named species of Australian Buprestidae, most of those in the Carnaby Collection are from West Australia.

Little scientific research has been done since 1929 and new ones are still being found. At least 100 of the complete Carnaby Collection are unnamed. Three species have been named after Keith Carnaby.

**Note: This small museum has the only examples of the collection in Western Australia and is the only place in the whole of Australia where any can be seen by the general public, as the contents of the Carnaby Collection were relocated to CSIRO premises in Canberra after the death of Keith and these are not available for public viewing.**

The species survive well, away from farming areas where rainfall is low and unreliable. Interestingly, mining has shown to have little impact, as only a relatively small portion of the land is cleared for this industry to operate.

Very little is known of the life history of Buprestidae. All are wood borers and spend anything from 7 to 17 years as larvae in the trunk and roots of the host trees. When the land is cleared these are burnt, together with the larvae. Melaleuca, Casuarina and Mallee are the usual trees of choice. As an adult they have a short life & after mating the females disperse to find suitable places to lay their eggs around the boles of trees. They need a fair bit of wood to keep them going for such a long time and the Carnaby's said that they seldom found more than one larvae or beetle in an individual root.



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**SOUTHERN VALLEYS**  
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Culture, Heritage and Arts Regional Tourism Grants



Australian Government  
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Regional Tourism Program

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# The beetle and butterfly collection of Boyup Brook

## Two more jewel beetles found by Keith and bearing his name

*Astraeus  
carnabyi*



Life Size

Found on the Carnaby farm 16 km N.E. of Lake Grace on *Casuarina huegeliana* in early January.

*Stigmodera  
Castiarina  
carnabyi*



Life Size

Was only found at Jerramungup in December 1970. All its habitat has now been destroyed. Farmers have cleared their land and Main Roads have cleared road verges. It was found on Mallee blossom.

## Memoir of the Carnaby Collection

As written by Mr. Sandy Chambers, a friend of Keith and Edith Carnaby

Being great friends of both Edith and Keith (Carnaby), as we travelled the state I too collected beetles for them. On one occasion I collected half a dozen of one variety and on presenting them to Keith he asked – “how long have you had them” – and I told him – “I only collected them a couple of weeks ago” – and without hesitation he said – “Then you must have been somewhere between Meelup and the Lighthouse on the Cape, they’ve come out after their seven-year cycle”. – he was right – I had just delivered a painting to a farmer along there. He had a remarkable memory as to the life of the Jewel Beetle state wide – not only a Beetle collector, he was a qualified carpenter producing all his own display cases with old fashioned joiner’s tools.

### Some background history of Keith:

He was an avid Australian stamp collector. When he started work at the age of 13, he became an apprentice boat builder in his father’s workshop.

His father had a boat hiring business as well, with 12 boats for hire. His father did not pay Keith a wage, but gave him sheets of Australian postage stamps, saying: “In years to come they’ll be worth a fortune” – and they were.

One Sunday, I was invited to Keith’s house – he was having a Stamp Auction – it had been advertised – the place was crowded. At the onset, he shouted out “Hold on lads, I’m only selling five sheets”. The proceeds from this sale allowed him to finance the publication of his book!

Keith was also a photographer. He developed not only black and white photos, but was experimenting with colour before it was available commercially. He produced all the coloured photos that are included in his book. (Available at the Visitor Centre.)

Upon his passing – in his Will – I was appointed Custodian of his collection that is housed in the Boyup Brook Visitor Centre.



## Memoir from the curator of the Carnaby Collection

As written by Mr. Iain Parker who has cared for the collection for over 40 years

“The bulk of this original and very extensive collection is now housed in the CSIRO (Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) buildings in Canberra and some may also be in private collections.”

In England as a teenager I used to collect Butterflies and Moths. When I first came to Boyup Brook in 1971 I was encouraged by the Marshall family to go and see Keith and Edie Carnaby because they knew he had a collection which might be of interest to me.

I was so impressed by the Carnaby’s and their knowledge and expertise in their chosen field of studying and collecting the Buprestidae, commonly called the Jewel Beetle.

During that time I think I visited them at least twice more at their wonderful museum on their farm not far from Wilga. When they decided to move some of their collection to the Tourist Centre some years later, I was asked by someone (whose name escapes me), to agree to come in regularly to check on the cabinets.

The display cabinets had all been hand made by Keith from pine timber cut from a fallen tree on the farm. He fitted a sponge-like material between the glass and the box in an effort to get a good seal. Over time this material broke down and at one stage a visiting expert alerted me to the concern he had noted that there could be a heavy infestation by something unknown. I took a couple of boxes up to the WA museum staff for advice and was reassured this only appeared to be a break down of the material used to create the seal.

Initially the care involved inspecting every box twice per year by removing the lid and installing a block of Paradichlorobenzene in order to control any invasion by predators or mites and especially a bug called the museum beetle. It had a very strong and unpleasant smell. Eventually it was discovered this product could cause cancer in humans and so an alternative solution was sourced again with advice from the staff at the WA and NT museums.

From that time forward if it is suspected there is a problem of any kind of infestation, the whole display box is simply put into a deep freezer for 7-10 days and any problem appears to be solved. Over time I have repaired the interior of the boxes with high quality archival paper where the first insecticide used had left pink stains. I have also managed to replace the seal on many of the boxes with an alternative felt type product instead of the foam. Every effort has been made to keep the collection close to the original display with only a few pins that had rusted through and a small number of beetles replaced with some Keith Carnaby gave me for safe keeping should they be needed. Similarly I have deliberately left the original typing and notations made by Keith in its entirety.

The most important part of the collection is the Jewel Beetle and Keith Carnaby produced a small book detailing the efforts he and his wife went to travelling all over the state and they were experts in their field. They also visited the Eastern States and some other countries.

The Carnaby’s enjoyed exchanging butterflies and beetles with collectors all over the world (which could be freely done at that time) because they felt these added colour and interest to the collection.

Over the more than 40 years this collection has been in my care it has held together extremely well. This has mostly been due to the many volunteers at the Visitor Centre who share a passion for the presentation and display of the insects. In time Air conditioning was installed and the lighting is restricted to protect the colours, which has also been helpful.

Many 100’s of people have visited this little museum and each year school groups come and enjoy educational talks which form an important part of the role of the community.