



Tom Kruse MBE 1999



Tom Kruse 1953

MEDIA RELEASE

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Kruses & Butlers return to Marree to unveil bust

The second of four bronze busts of Birdsville Track mailman E.G. (Tom) Kruse MBE was unveiled at 11.00 am on Saturday June 7th at Marree, during the June long weekend and before the start of the Marree Races.

Tom and Valma Kruse and Robert Butler, son of Tom's *The Back of Beyond* driving partner Henry Butler will unveil the bust at the Marree Rural Transaction Centre.

The four bronze busts of legendary outback mailman Tom Kruse have been produced by highly regarded Robe based sculptor Ms Patricia Moseley.

Marree, Birdsville, the National Motor Museum (NMM) at Birdwood and Waterloo, Tom's hometown are the locations for the four life-sized bronze busts. The NMM bust was unveiled His Excellency Governor General Michael Jeffrey on March 30th. The Birdsville bust will be unveiled on Friday September 5th during the Birdsville Races weekend and the date of the Waterloo bust unveiling is yet to be decided.

The NMM is the permanent home of the 1936 Leyland Badger which featured in the classic 1954 Australian docudrama *The Back of Beyond*.

The Badger Restoration Group, headed by Neil Weidenbach and Corrugated Air Productions, headed by Executive Producer Ian Doyle, raised the funds needed to complete the Tom Kruse Bust Project.

"Our original target was two busts and \$12,000.00. Significantly more was raised and as a result, we are now working on a fourth bust for Tom's hometown of Waterloo in the mid north," bust Appeal Co-coordinator Ian Doyle said.

The project attracted significant support from a number of organisations including the CMV Foundation, the RFDS, Corrugated Air Productions and numerous private donors.

"The group believes this is an important project which recognises the significant contribution made by Tom to outback Australia," Ian Doyle said.

Tom Kruse celebrates his 94th birthday on August 28th this year. His mail run re-enactment in his fully restored 1936 Leyland Badger was the subject of an evocative, colourful and emotional documentary *Last Mail from Birdsville – the Story of Tom Kruse* produced by Corrugated Air Productions in 1999. It's now available on a double DVD from the Royal Flying Doctor Service (phone 1800 813 318) as part of *The Back of Beyond Collection*.

"Tom's travelling OK at the moment and the organising committee is keen to have both Tom and wife Valma participate in unveiling the busts. We are delighted Robert Butler is also able to be at Marree. It will be a family reunion for the Kruse and Butler families," Ian Doyle said.

The Back of Beyond introduced Tom Kruse, Henry Butler and the 1936 Leyland Badger mail truck to a generation of Australians. Most never forgot the extraordinary images of the men and the battered truck doing battle each fortnight with the sand and isolation along the 500 kilometre Birdsville Track - outback Australia's toughest mail run. Shot in black and white, *The Back of Beyond* remains one of the most critically acclaimed and awarded films ever made in Australia.

"Tom Kruse is a dogged, tough giant of a man who was awarded an MBE in 1955 for services to the people of the outback. We recognise far too few of our heroes. These bronze busts celebrate the life of one of this country's living legends," Ian Doyle said.

More information:

Ian Doyle
Appeal Co-Coordinator
0417 819 189

Lizzie Khan
Marree Transaction Centre
08 8675 8222

Transport & Accommodation package:

A three day bus transport and Marree Hotel accommodation package (Friday 6th to Sunday 8th April) has been arranged for the Marree bust unveiling. For details contact Valley Coaches (phone 08 8832 2528). Passengers can be picked up Adelaide, Port Pirie, Port Augusta and points north. Seats and beds are limited.



Pandie Pandie Station 1986

Birdsville Track 1999