

Sir John Jensen
Bushwalker and public servant

John Klünder Jensen, or Jack to his bushwalking friends, was an active member of the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club from 1922 to 1938 and continued his interest in walking and in the Australian bush until his death at the age of 85 in 1970.

During the 1930s he was a member of the Club's Touring Committee and was the author of many of the walking tours suggested in the annual publication of the Club, *The Melbourne Walker*, during those years.

John Jensen was a self-educated man, who was born in Bendigo in 1884 and had to leave school at the age of 11 to find work, following the early death of his father in 1895. He moved to Melbourne a few years later as a junior messenger in the Ordnance Branch of the Victorian State Public Service and eventually made a highly successful career in the new Commonwealth Government of Australia, where he was known as J K Jensen.

Early stages in his career include a visit to the USA in 1911, where he was sent by the Victorian Branch of the Commonwealth Department of Defence, mainly to train in the management of munitions production. He applied this training in his work as Chief Accountant of the Small Arms Factory in Lithgow, NSW. Throughout World War 1 he worked in Melbourne in the Central Secretariat of the Department of Defence and was sent abroad again at the end of the war, this time to the London Arsenal Office of that department. From 1918 to 1921 he studied how Britain had mobilised munitions production for the war and purchased British munitions plants for the Australian government.

When he returned to Australia in 1921, he took up a post at the newly established Munitions Supply Board, where he was eventually promoted to Deputy Chairman, a role he held until 1943, in the succeeding Factory Board. From 1922 until 1939 he was also the Chairman of the Contract Board. These were the main years of his involvement with the Melbourne Amateur Walking and Touring Club.

It is easy to understand that hikes such as "Over the Baw Baws to Walhalla"(1922), or "Across the Alps – Bruthen to Bright" (1926), or "Noojee to Warburton (1935), usually in the company of two other walkers, restored the body and mind of this hard-working public servant. These were twice yearly walks lasting several days to a week at a time and which frequently covered between 70 and 130 miles in distance.

John Jensen often carried a tripod and recorded the walks in photograph albums and sometimes contributed reflective articles to *The Melbourne Walker*.

In 1942 John Jensen became Permanent Head of the Department of Munitions and a member of the Allied Supply Standing Committee during World War 2. He later played a key role in post-war reconstruction in Australia and also served for several years, after his retirement in 1949, in the Australian Immigration Planning Council and on the boards of engineering and communications companies. Soon after the war he was knighted for his services to Australia and so became Sir John Jensen. He married Maria Ruby Gordon in Sydney in 1911 and they had five children, Margaret, Jack, Kathleen, Frank and Eileen.

Marie-Therese Jensen, 9 August, 2011