

## Only One Horse Came Home

David Evans

I have always had a deep interest in the role of The Australian Light Horse. To be brutal, not one horse volunteered to go to the other side of the world to fight a cruel, bloody and human war. But somewhere approaching 400,000 Light Horse, Heavy Horses used for pulling wagons, plus donkeys and mules were sent to India, South Africa, to WWI and even some to New Guinea in WWII.

Just one horse returned from WWI. He was named Sandy a gelding belonging to Maj. Gen. Sir William Bridges. Sandy saw out his days at the Re-Mount yards at Maribyrnong in Victoria, near Melbourne. Bridges died on action and his remains were brought back to Duntroon, the Military College he helped to establish before departing for the Middle East.

But we have a Tamworth and an Armidale link to a Memorial which has been created so future generations will remember all the Australian horses that died in war.

In the year 2000 two things happened. Former NEGS student Tanya Bartlett was asked to consider how she would create a full size, life-like memorial to our war horses. She came up with a maquette of the design. Meanwhile I sent out a survey to establish if people would support such an idea and donate a few dollars. The response was overwhelming. So an appeal to raise funds for the Memorial was launched on Anzac Day 2001.

Bronze Memorials don't come cheaply. Tanya's bronze was to cost our small committee \$150,000, the base an additional \$40,000 which would be constructed by Council, and four bronze information plaques and a modest unveiling and some quality postcards would leave little change out of \$200,000.

So between 2000 and 2005 the Memorial was created. We supplied the model horse, grand-daughter of the famous Stock Horse Abby, and Amy provided a fine model for Tanya. In fact, Amy put herself in Tanya's studio on a few occasions—indicating it was time to get on with the work. The bronze is created in the centuries old lost wax process. I checked with the War Memorial in Canberra on how many geldings/mares were sent to WWI. The reply came back—equal numbers, but no stallions.

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David Evans OAM is Memorial Chairman, Light Horse rider and ABC Broadcaster.



*Light Horse riders in Tamworth at the unveiling ceremony.*



*Tanya Bartlett, in Newcastle, finalizing the model for the casting.*

So with many trips to Tanya's Newcastle studio, the steel and plasticine model became the final design, and after the rubber moulds were taken, it was off to the foundry. There is only one foundry that handles a bronze as large as Amy and Trooper Simon. It is Crawford's Castings of Sydney. A specially prepared heavy-duty trailer was used to bring the 1.5 tonne casting to Tamworth. It was installed on its base, which had 6 massive foundations sunk into its location in the city's Bicentennial Park as it is on river loam. Not that I panicked, but it was just 36 hours before the opening.

Let's refer back to the second reference to Armidale. Working for ABC Radio, I had been doing a series of interviews at UNE for the ABC Rural Report and the Country Hour. I called into the Armidale Light Horse Museum and did a couple of interviews for the following day—Remembrance Day. That and my interest in riding my mare in Light Horse re-enactment is how the Memorial came about.

The opening and dedication took place on the weekend of the anniversary on the famous Beersheba Charge (31 October 1917). The opening was performed by Maj. Gen. 'Digger' James (ret.). There were 47 Light Horse riders at the opening which followed a main street march. Being the person behind the Memorial, I was asked to carry the flag.

It is not for Sandy but for all his equine mates that remained in the deserts of the Middle East.

Lest we forget.



*Side view of the memorial in position in Tamworth, NSW.*

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