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Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

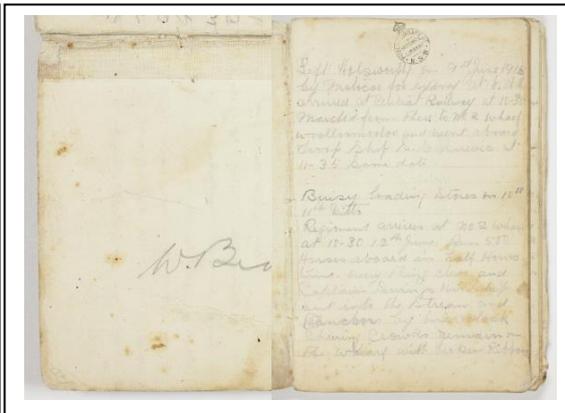
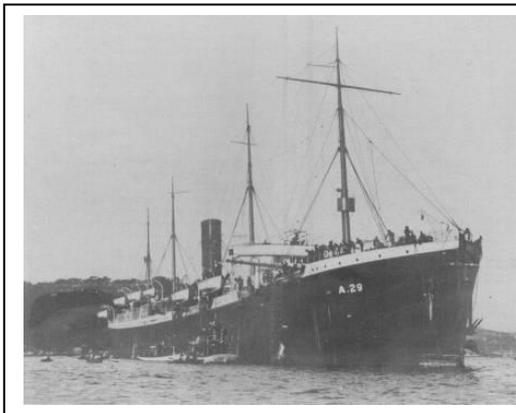
On facebook

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2020

email: helm2281@gmail.com

IN THE STEPS OF THE LIGHT HORSE

The Eastern Front of WWI was fought around the Mediterranean against the Turks. The Australian Light Horse were originally sent to Egypt. The troops were then sent to Gallipoli as infantry. After withdrawal, they were reunited with their horses and were deployed to protect the Suez Canal; and then the Desert Mounted Column, commanded by Lt. Gen. Harry Chauvel, with a planned attack on Beersheba, which was not only strategically important, but was the site of vital water wells. After 3 nights riding through the desert the Light Horsemen joined British troops. At 4.30pm, with only an hour of daylight left, the order was given to the 4th and 12th brigades to charge, taking advantage of speed and surprise. The Turks did not have time to adjust their gun sights, and 800 brave horsemen yelling stockmen's cries and cooees, galloped 3km and leapt over the top of the enemy trenches to take the town of Beersheba on October 31, 1917. Casualties: 31 Anzac soldiers lost their lives, 36 wounded; 70 horses killed, 60 wounded; in what is known as the last great cavalry charge. [According to legend, the Aussies eagerly rode at speed as they had misheard the name of the town as "Beers and Sheilas".]



WWI Troopship SS Suevic in Sydney Harbour.

Structures in the aft section were stables for the horses. The troops travelled with their horses to carry out daily duties of rubbing down the horses, cleaning the stables, and exercising them in a deck space covered by sand and ash. This kept the horses and men fit and ready for service in Egypt. On 9/6/1916, Lance Corp. William Bradbury (originally from Crookwell) left Holsworthy with the 12th Light Horse, to embark on the SS Suevic bound for Port Suez, along with 500 horses. On this day, he began to write a diary which spanned his war service until he was killed at the Battle of Beersheba, 31/10/17, age 22

The diary is now part of the collection at State Library NSW.

Sources: State Library NSW; Newcastle Herald; ABC; Naval Historical Society of Aust.



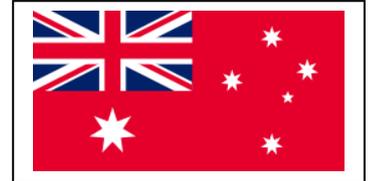
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**Regretfully, we will no longer be based at The Chapel.
We will continue to publish our newsletters and hold
events. We are still eagerly looking for stories to record.**

We extend our thanks to Pat Conroy's office for supporting this edition

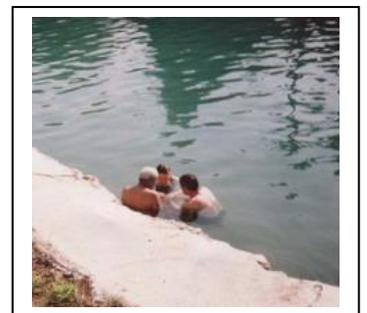
RE-ENACTMENT RIDE: IN THE STEPS OF THE LIGHT HORSE

After a year of intensive planning and negotiations, the three week tour evolved, and 70 men and women from the Australian Light Horse Association set off in October 2007 to pay tribute on the 90th Anniversary of the Battle of Beersheba. The people embarking on the tour were descendants; had family ties or special interests. For the 48 riders, this was to be a ride to remember, organised by Barry Rogers. They ranged in age from 18 to 80 years old. The riders, used military saddles (designed to carry a lot of equipment with the least discomfort to horse and rider); wore WWI full dress uniforms; rifles; swords and bayonets were sheathed as a symbol of peace. One of the riders was Sam Dhnaram from Swansea, aged 69 at the time. Sam, who belongs to the Murrurundi Light Horse troop, is well known in Swansea, and the Lake Macquarie and Newcastle areas, leading Anzac Day marches, Remembrance Days, Reserve Forces Days. Sam would carry the red ensign flown by our troops in WWI. [From 1901 to 1924 the red ensign, which displays a red background, was used as the Australian flag by state and local governments; the blue ensign, with the blue background, which we are familiar with today, was to be used for Commonwealth buildings and official occasions.]

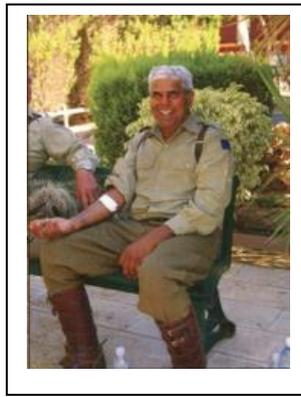


The red and blue ensigns, and pennants for the 4th and 12th Light Horse Brigades were proudly carried in memory of Australia's servicemen and women who had served in the past, and those who still serve today. "The whole point of the trip is to keep their dream alive, to show respect for what they did, and are still doing, for our country. The ride will be the highlight of the trip, but there are many other things on the agenda, including the presentation of an Australian flag to the Turkish authorities and visiting the graves of some of our fallen... As I ride, I will be wondering what those long-ago soldiers were thinking as they rode the same ground under very different conditions." Sam revealed in an interview with Lake Macquarie News, before leaving. The tour began in Turkey, where the dismounted Light Horse fought the Gallipoli campaign; and ended with the three-day mounted ride through the desert to Beersheba.

After exploring Istanbul, including the Spice markets, a cruise on the Bosphorus, Kapi Palace and the Grand Bazaar; the tour moved to the beautiful seaport of Eccabat, Anzac Cove and the Gallipoli battlefields. For logistics, the tour reversed the route taken by the Light Horse, moving South to Beershaba, rather than North as the WWI troops did. On reaching the ancient seaport of Jaffa, the tour learned about the background for Australian military involvement in this region, which began with Napoleon's invasion of 1798; and subsequent British involvement. In Tel Aviv after a visit to the Diaspora Museum which presented the history of the Jews, a visit to The Australian Soldiers Park was in order. Another museum celebrated the Zion Mule Corps and Jewish legion which served alongside the Anzacs. After visiting various biblical and historical sites, a day was spent at Semakh where the Light Horse charged the railway station at night; then a boat ride across the Sea of Galilee. Next the tour followed the route taken by the Light Horse in September 1918 to Damascus. A high point was the visit to the ancient village at Katzrin, which revealed how people lived in the first century. At Yardenit, Sam took part in the tradition to be baptized near where the Jordan River exits the Sea of Galilee. On to a kibbutz, (Communal settlement), the site of Gan-garoo, the Australian Wildlife Park. A visit to Jerusalem was followed by Jericho, the world's oldest city and many bazaars. The Commonwealth War Cemetery, where some 2400 Australian, New Zealand and British soldiers from WWI are buried, held special meaning. A feature was overnight camping in tents at Park Eshkol, the night before getting ready for the ride. October 27th was the day

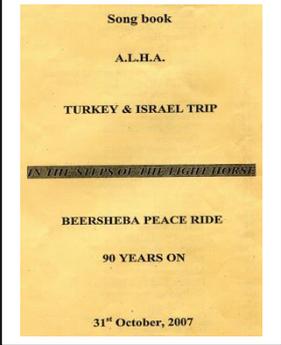


to oil and match saddles; horses and riders; after a 17km ride, the Australian Light Horse memorial at Bir Asluj was unveiled. After bathing in the hot springs, the riders slept in the Bedouin tourist camp tents. The Bedouins took the opportunity to sell fruit, dates, trinkets and souvenirs on the route, just as they did during the war. October 28th saw the riders camping in the desert on their own ground sheets and army blankets – a very cold night. The 30th, the day before the charge was spent in cleaning and preparing for the big day.

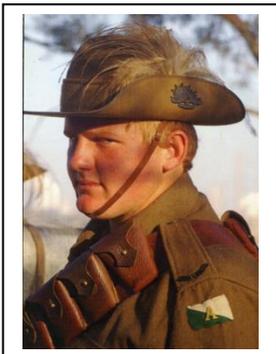


Sam leading mounted parade from Merkaz Ze; iriim to Allenby Memorial and the British Commonwealth Cemetery.
 Sam collapsed from heat exhaustion, but after an hour was back in action like the trooper he is.
 Sam laying a poppy on the grave of William Bradbury at Beersheba. He was badly wounded and died in the charge.

In retracing the steps of their heroes many events from WWI were incorporated. The last activity on the Gallipoli Peninsula was a game of cricket on Shell Green, as in WWI to distract the Turks from the withdrawal of our troops. In the evening songs were sung at campsites from a specially collated song book with favourites, just like 90 years before. [Waltzing Matilda; Botany Bay; Pub with no Beer; Yellow Rose of Texas; Tipperary; You are my Sunshine; Daisy Daisy; When Irish Eyes are Smiling; Pack up your Troubles; Show Me the Way to go Home; Irene Good Night; Danny Boy; From a Jack to a King. Rounded off with the more spiritual Onward Christian Soldiers; How Great Thou Art; Abide with Me; The Lord's my Shepherd; Amazing Grace.]



Now known as Be'er Sheva, it is the 4th most populated city in Israel and the 2nd largest in area. The riders often had to negotiate Wadis (narrow ravines) where they could only ride single file. The ground varied from hard rocky plains, rocks and stones, to deep drifting sand. The rides of about 5 hours a day in 35 degree heat were exhausting. Along the way, shepherds and their flocks; camels and donkeys could be seen. They arrived to a tumultuous welcome as they rode through the streets of Be'er Sheva lined with Israelis shouting and waving flags. After a moving service; the riders moved out at 1545hrs at a walk, progressing to a trot, then a canter in their symbolic ride for peace. For many it was more than a historical re-enactment; there was a spiritual dimension as well.

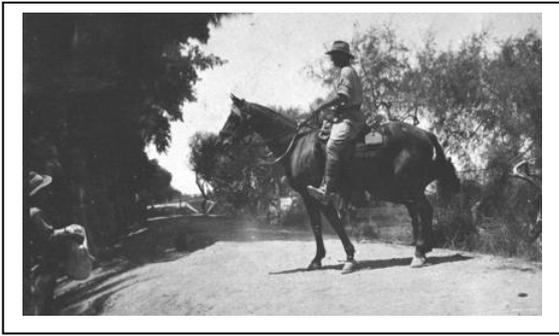


Memorial statue: The Park of the Australian Soldier.



Sources:
 Itinerary
 Barry Rogers
 Sam Dhnaram
 Spur
 Herald News

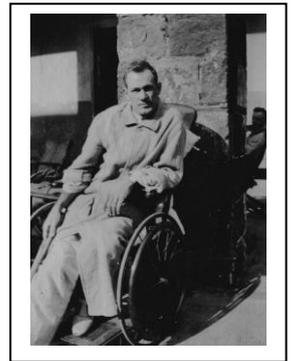
The living legacy of the Light Horsemen's daring WWI cavalry charge *Landline* 2017



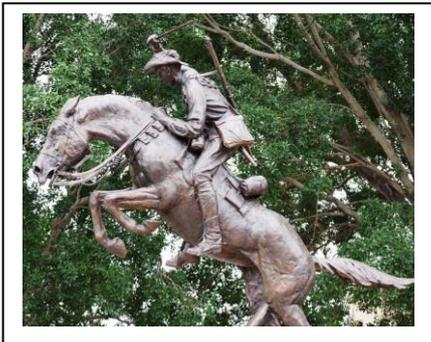
Peter Haydon from the Bloomfield stud near Murrurundi in the Upper Hunter Valley, recollected how his great uncle, Captain Guy Haydon and his horse Midnight, which he had grown up with, took part in the campaign at Beersheba. To get within striking distance of the town the Light Horsemen had ridden across scorching desert sand; and their horses had not had water for 36 hours. They had to get to the water wells at Beersheba or perish. Charging the last few kilometres at top speed they surprised the Turks by jumping over the top of their trenches. Neither horse nor rider hesitated for a moment. As they leapt over, a bullet was fired

upwards by a Turkish rifleman in the trench underneath. The bullet travelled through Midnight's stomach, through the saddle and bed roll; and lodged in Guy's back, narrowly missing his spine, but leaving a hole large enough to put your fist in. Guy survived the charge and was evacuated to Cairo, but Midnight made the ultimate sacrifice. Guy put the small copper bullet in a tin and sent it home to his family.

Australia sent more than 135,000 horses to WWI, mostly to the Middle East. The Haydon's sent 3 horses – great uncles Guy and Barney, and neighbour Max Wright. Even though Guy's war was over, Barney and Max continued to ride their horses until war ended. Due to quarantine restrictions they could not bring their loyal mates home. However, the same bloodlines that raised those warhorses over a century ago, are still in existence at Bloomfield; as are the letters, diaries and maps by his forbears documenting their war service.



Muswellbrook unveils commemorative Battle of Beersheba statue



The statue "Over the Top" was dedicated to those who served 100 years previously at Beersheba. It has special significance to the Upper Hunter. Muswellbrook is the home of the 12th /16th Hunter River Lancers, which are a successor unit of the Australian Light Horse Regiment. The memorial recognises the valour of the Waler horses, a breed critical to the success of the battle; many were raised in the Upper Hunter. The Walers assembled at Piercefield in Denman before being transported by train to port in Sydney, for deployment overseas. The commander of the 12th Light Horse Regiment, Lt-Col. Donald Cameron hailed from Rouchel. *Muswellbrook Chronicle*.

The Last Ride by John Stuart WA

When the war began, like many young men, John wanted to join the Light Horse expecting adventure; having seen the film "40,000 Horsemen" and Light Horse events at Royal Shows. Shortly after turning 17 he persuaded his mother to help him enlist - (minimum age was 18). At Northam Military Camp (near Perth) horse lines were laid out ready for their arrival by train. Along with military training, was a 3 times daily routine of caring for the horses. Saddles heavily coated in dubbin preservative arrived – stamped 1915. There were only enough rifles for overseas units, others were given broom handles to learn drills and combat movements, to be later replaced by Boer War and civilian hunting rifles. The pay of 5 shillings a day, 3 meals a day, friends and company made it worthwhile to them. While based at Wanneroo an intricate grid of coastal patrols was executed. The best times were being able to swim the horses in the sea, followed by a gallop along the sand, a rub down, brushing, then fitting the nosebag with feed for the horses. For water they would dig a hole about 2 feet deep and fresh water would seep in, which was scooped up by pannikins and poured into canvas buckets, billycans or hats.

At the outbreak of WWII there were 25 Light Horse Regiments. They were being partially mechanised and most were gradually converted to machine gun, armoured car or motorised infantry. Most were disbanded 1943-44; and personnel distributed to other units. By 1945, only 2 units remained. *Source: Spur; Wikipedia.*