

## ANZAC DAY HORSE PARADE – Tuesday 25 April 2017



BHPC members took part in the ANZAC Day horse parade at the Brookfield Showgrounds, part of the day's activities based around the Shell Green cricket competition and commemoration event organised by the RSL and Brookfield Cricket Club. This event acknowledges the Shell Green cricket match played at Gallipoli during preparations for its evacuation, the history of the Brookfield community's commitment to supply horses for the war effort, and the sacrifice of past Kenmore State High student Mathew Hopkins who was killed in Afghanistan in 2009. The horse parade re-enacts the handover of Brookfield horses to the Australian Light Horse Brigade.

Pony club members led their horses in pairs in a troop line with members of the Light Horse, and stood lined up behind the Army XI and Brookfield cricket teams along with Armoured Vehicles for the remembrance recital of the Ode and the Last Post.

BHPC members who led their horses were Kylie and Abbey Eastwell, Sandy Pollitt & Sue Austin, Emily and Grace Davis, Grace Beatty and Ellie Doerfer, Sarah Willsford and Jack Thompson (grandfather), Alessa Wiltshire and Christene Perrett, Anne-Marie Wiltshire and Leanne Stewart, Emma Weitemeyer and Emily McCabe, and Annie Bremner. Members from Karana Downs and Moggill Pony Clubs, and the McIntyre Centre also participated. Sarah Willsford, Grace Beatty and Emily McCabe were three of our Pony Club members wearing their relative's war medals.



Sarah Willsford and her grandfather, Mr Jack Thompson, led Oakey and Mia in the parade. They are pictured re-enacting the handover of the Brookfield horses to the Australian Light Horse Brigade. Sarah and her grandfather share a love of horses. Mr Thompson was invited to train with the Australian Equestrian team for the 1964 Olympic Games. Sarah's Great Great Uncle Frank Thompson was an exceptional horseman in the Light Horse and later served in the Camel Corp. He was killed in Beersheba on the 16th November 1917.

Sarah was also wearing a purple poppy to signify the sacrifices of the animals that served in the war. How much do we know about the horses that served our nation? It turns out that only one horse returned to Australia from the First World War.

In the First World War 136,000 "walers" (the general name applied to Australian horses sent abroad) were sent overseas for use by the Australian Imperial Force and the British and Indian governments. One horse from the 136,000 was returned to Australia.

"Sandy" belonged to Major General Sir William Bridges. He was one of 6,100 horses that had embarked for Gallipoli. However, very few of the horses were put ashore, as there was no room or requirement on Anzac Cove. From 1 August 1915 Sandy was in the care of Captain Leslie Whitfield, an Australian Army Veterinary Corps officer in Egypt. Sandy remained in Egypt until he and Whitfield were transferred to France during March 1916.

In October 1917 Senator George Pearce, Minister for Defence, called for Sandy to be returned to Australia for pasture at Duntroon and in May 1918 Sandy was sent from the Australian Veterinary Hospital at Calais to the Remount Depot at Swaythling in England. After three months of veterinary observation, Sandy was declared free of disease and in September 1918 he was boarded on the freighter Booral, sailing from Liverpool and arriving in Melbourne in November. Sandy was turned out to graze at the Central Remount Depot at Maribyrnong where he saw out the rest of his days.