

BILL THE BASTARD

By Lyndal Cosgrove

e. cosgrove@bigpond.net.au

You may remember that in the *Queensland Family Historian* of November 2018, Vol.39, No.4, p.134 I wrote an article on *Michael Shanahan and Bill the Bastard*, and also on page 129 of the same edition I wrote about *The Jericho Cup* and referred to an excerpt of Professor Roland Perry's book *Bill the Bastard*, explaining the reason for the Jericho Cup. In *QFH* November 2019, Vol.40, No.4, p.129 I gave an update on the progress of the sculpture of Bill the Bastard.

Harden-Murrumburrah is a twin-town community between Canberra and Yass, NSW. This was the birthplace of the Light Horse, when **James Alexander (Kenneth) Mackay** (1859-1935) was instrumental in forming the Australian Light Horse and set out his blueprint for a mounted Australian militia including a uniform, slouch hat and motto "For Hearths and Homes", the first call up muster being held on 30 August 1897 in Harden-Murrumburrah. The first troop was named the 1st Australian Horse. The Light Horse served in the Second Boer War and WWI. This was to become one of Australia's major defence mechanisms in WWI and ultimately, following Australian Federation, all Australian horse units were amalgamated into the Australian Light Horse.

The Australian Light Horsemen were mounted troops with the characteristics of both cavalry and mounted infantry. Horses were used for rapid mobility and then the men dismounted and then fought as infantry, with one out of each four man section leading the horses away while the others fought. The Waler horses were very hardy and had great endurance, even under extreme stress from lack of food and water. The Walers were the Australian stockman's horse of preference and prized as military remounts, being 15 to 16 hands high and able to carry 130 kg. They were the backbone of the Australian Light Horse's mounted forces and especially suited to working in the harsh climate of the Sinai Peninsula and Palestine, where they proved superior to camels as a means of transporting large bodies of troops and equipment.

Kenneth was well educated for his day and was a soldier, magistrate, politician, amateur jockey, poet and an author.



*Maj Gen J A Kenneth Mackay
CB, OBE, VD, FRGS*

The sculptor, **Carl Valerius**, had originally provided a small bronze statue of Bill the Bastard and **Michael Shanahan** rescuing four Tasmanian soldiers from certain death from the Turks after losing their horses at the Battle of Romani, which can be viewed in the Memorial precinct in Murrumburrah.



The original statue showing the 5 riders

A simple error in Roland Perry's book states that a 'life size' statue rather than a 'life like' statue could be viewed in Murrumburrah.

continued

Carl Valerius was prompted into action in 2012 and proceeded to sculpt the life size version of Bill the Bastard with his five riders. Roland Perry officially unveiled the life sized model of Bill the Bastard SUP on 4 August 2016, the centenary of the Battle of Romani. The work then began to create the final sculpture, with bronzing completed by Crawford's Foundry in Sydney. The final statue was placed in the Memorial Precinct in early 2022 as a permanent memorial to the courage, strength and endurance of the Australian Light Horse.

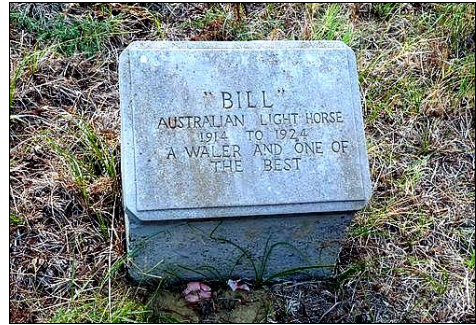


The life size statue showing the 5th rider

Field Marshall Lord Allenby (WWI) succinctly described the Light Horsemen or troopers when he wrote of them *"The Australian Light Horseman combines with a splendid physique a restless activity of mind... on every variety of ground – mountain, plain, desert, swamp or jungle – the Australian Light Horseman has proved himself equal to the best. He has earned the gratitude of the Empire and the admiration of the world"*.

Bill the Bastard, Australia's Greatest Warhorse, is immortalised in bronze to commemorate the Waler horse and the Australian Light Horse in the 1st Australian Horse and Australian Light Horse Memorial precinct in Murrumburrah, NSW.

Bill survived the war but was unable to return to Australia. He worked for the Commonwealth War Graves Commission in Gallipoli after the war, retrieving battle artefacts. He died in 1924 at the age of 21, and is buried in the shadow of Walker's Ridge at Gallipoli.



*"Bill" Australian Light Horse 1914 to 1924
a Waler and one of the best*

www.thejerichocup.com.au/news-media/bill-the-bastards-grave-wa



Model of horse used to cast the statue



Carl Valerius and the author in front of the life sized model in wax, clay and polystyrene, used in preparation for creating the final bronzed statue

*For further information refer to
<https://billthebastard.org/>*

(photographs provided by the author) ■

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November Journal cover photo



The other side