**OF ANIMALS IN WAR EVENT COMMEMORATES THOSE WHO HAD NO CHOICE**

On Sunday 23 February the Australian War Memorial will be holding a special event, *Of animals in war*, to commemorate the role animals have played in support of Australia's war efforts. The all-day family event will be an opportunity for those who have respect for the invaluable contributions of animals in Australia's military history to honour those that served, suffered, and died alongside our soldiers.

*Of animals in war* will begin at 9.30 am with a commemorative ceremony, including:

- A welcome by the Director of the Memorial, Dr Brendan Nelson;
- An overview of the significant role animals have played in Australia’s military history by renowned animal trainer and behavioural advisor, Nigel Allsopp;
- A selection of moving songs relating to the sacrifice of war animals, as performed by award-winning country musician and equestrian Tania Kernaghan;
- Insightful stories told by the School of Military Engineering regarding the practical and vital support of Explosive Detection Dogs (EDD) in Afghanistan;
- A reading from acclaimed author, Anthony Hill;
- A chaplain’s blessing; and
- A wreathlaying ceremony.

A tribute wall of emotive war photography drawn from the Memorial's National Collection and the Department of Defence will be displayed as a backdrop to the commemorative ceremony in order to encapsulate the practical and psychological roles animals have played in war.

Following the ceremony, a range of outdoor family-friendly activities and market stalls will take place in the Sculpture Garden of the Memorial. There will be demonstrations conducted by the School of Military Engineering and their EDDs, including a visit from retired EDD Sarbi, the RSPCA Purple Cross recipient who spent nearly 14 months missing in action after being separated from her handler in Afghanistan in September 2009.

An event for all ages, *Of animals in war* will include other key indoor and outdoor activities such as talks from the Australian Light Horse Association and the Canberra Racing Pigeon Combine, which will also release pigeons from Memorial grounds. There will be a range of informative and engaging public programs for the family, including art and craft, and story time.

The special event will be marked by a unique Last Post Ceremony. The School of Military Engineering will have their Explosive Detection Dogs lining the Pool of Reflection in honour of Sapper Darren Smith, 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment, and his Explosive Detection Dog, Herbie. Both Smith and Herbie were killed in action in Afghanistan in June 2010. The Last Post Ceremony is streamed daily online at [www.awm.gov.au](http://www.awm.gov.au).

Join the Memorial at this special event to remember the service and sacrifice of all animals that have worked alongside Australians in support of our war efforts.

For more information, please visit [www.awm.gov.au/events/animals-memorial](http://www.awm.gov.au/events/animals-memorial).
*Visitors are invited to bring along their furry friends for the outdoor component of the event.*

**What:** Of animals in war all-day family event at the Australian War Memorial

**Where/when:**
- Outdoor displays and activities: 9.00 am – 2.00 pm, Sculpture Garden
- Commemorative ceremony: 9.30 am – 10.30 am, *Simpson and his donkey, 1915*
- Indoor talks: 10.00 am – 4.15 pm, Courtyard Gallery and Galleries
- Last Post Ceremony: 4.55 pm – 5.10 pm, Commemorative Area

**When:**
Sunday 23 February 2014

**Who:**
- Dr Brendan Nelson, Director, Australian War Memorial
- Nigel Allsopp, author, animal trainer, and behavioural advisor
- Tania Kernaghan, Australian country musician
- Anthony Hill, Australian author
- School of Military Engineering with their EDDs
- Australian Light Horse Association
- Canberra Racing Pigeon Combine

**CONTACT DETAILS**
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**General information**
- Members of the general public are welcome to bring their own seats or rugs; limited seating will be available on the day.
- The Memorial encourages responsible pet ownership. Please ensure you bring along the necessary equipment (e.g. leads, muzzles, appropriate pooper scoopers etc.) to keep your pet social and safe and to keep the grounds clean for all to enjoy.
- The Memorial will have a number of water stations available for pets.
- Food and beverage will be available for purchase from the Terrace Café.
MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

Please find below further stories and backgrounders of interest. For further information on any of the below stories, or for support material, please contact the Communications and Marketing team on the contact details provided.

TANIA KERNAGHAN

Australian through and through, Tania Kernaghan is one of this country’s most loved and respected performers. Whether it’s singing up a storm on stage, emceeing a black tie event, sharing her life’s journey through public speaking events or rolling up her sleeves to help out with one of her much-loved charities, Tania is a passionate Australian, sharing her love of the country and its characters through her stories and songwriting.

An integral member of the Kernaghan country music dynasty, Tania spent much of her childhood touring the length and breadth of Australia with her family. Those wonderful, adventure-filled days instilled in Tania a love of both performing and storytelling, and saw her forge a professional songwriting partnership with younger sister Fiona.

Tania’s impressive list of musical achievements includes six studio albums, winner of numerous Golden Guitar Awards including the coveted Female Vocalist of the Year (twice), Song of The Year, Album of the Year and Vocal Collaboration of the Year. With 15 number one radio hits to her credit, record sales in the hundreds of thousands and sell out concerts across Australia, Tania’s popularity continues to skyrocket through her ever growing fan base. It is obvious that Tania holds a warm place in the hearts of fans the world over.

NIGEL BARRY ALLSOPP

Author, Animal Trainer, and behavioural advisor

Nigel Allsopp was born in the UK but started his Military Career in 1980 as a Military Working Dog Handler in the Royal New Zealand Air Force Police. Within his 15 years of service he rose to the rank of DOGMASTER responsible for all aspects of Canine Operations and training within the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF).

He became the first Military Dog trainer to qualify as a NZ civilian police dog trainer and supervisor. Nigel has trained members from numerous government agencies such as Customs, Police, Corrective Service and Federal Aviation Security in the use of specialist dogs. He has also trained and supplied specialist detection dogs and Military Working Dogs to South East Asian Countries on behalf of formal government requests whilst in the NZDF.

Nigel left the military to pursue a keen interest in wild canine research and commenced work for the Auckland Zoo training all sorts of exotic animals to enhance their behavioural enrichment. This included 3 years as an elephant keeper whilst also training the zoo’s sea lions. He immigrated to Australia to continue his interest in wild canines by working at several zoos and wildlife parks with Manned Wolves, Timber Wolves, Dingoes and African Cape Hunting Dogs.
The lure of working with dogs again inspired Nigel to join the Queensland Police Service where he is currently a Senior Constable in the QPS Dog Section working with a Firearms Explosive Detection Dog (FEDD).

LAST POST CEREMONY: SAPPER DARREN SMITH
The Last Post ceremony on the 23 February will commemorate the service and sacrifice of Sapper Darren Smith and his Explosive Detection Dog, Herbie.

On the morning of 7 June 2010, Mentoring Team Alpha conducted a routine foot patrol from Patrol Base Wali with the intention of disrupting the Taliban laying Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) in and around the village of Sorkh Lez in the Mirabed Valley. Herbie, Sapper Smith and Sapper Jacob Moreland were investigating metal signature on the footpad of a creek bed, when an IED was triggered. The blast killed Herbie, and mortally wounded both Sapper Smith and Sapper Moreland.

Sapper Smith was born and raised in Adelaide, South Australia and attended Wirreanda High School. Active in that school’s Australian Rules football team, he also played guitar in the school band.

Enlisting in the Army Reserve in 2001, he first undertook basic training at Kapooka, New South Wales. He was posted to the 3rd Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers and completed his training as a combat engineer, specialising in bridge building, minefield clearance and demolition. In 2004, he transferred to the regular Army and was posted to the 1st Combat Engineer Regiment in Darwin. After developing an interest in working with dogs, he undertook training as an Explosives Detection Dog (EDD) handler and transferred to the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment. It was here that he was first paired with Herbie; a 2 year old Collie-cross and undertook six months training in preparation for deployment in Afghanistan.

Sapper Smith and Herbie deployed together to Afghanistan with the Mentoring Task Force in 2010. Part of their duties included regularly accompanying infantry patrols – it was the role of Sapper Smith and Herbie to counter the threat of IEDs.

Sapper Smith was 25 years old when he was killed in action. He is listed on the Afghanistan panel of the Roll of Honour, along with the 40 Australian soldiers killed in that campaign.

STORIES OF ANIMALS IN WAR
Animals have played varying practical and psychological roles in Australia’s wartime history, from the working animals such as dogs, horses, mules, pigeons and camels, who gave Australians both physical and practical assistance, to those that played support roles as friends, companions and mascots who gave soldiers affection, hope and relief from the stress of war. Of Animals in War recognises all animals that have worked alongside Australians for over one hundred years.
**Retired Explosive Detection Dog, Sarbi**

Sarbi's story is one of survival... For nearly 14 months, Sarbi an Australian Special Forces Explosive Detection dog, was separated from her handler in Afghanistan.

The black Labrador-cross had been declared missing in action following a battle with the Taliban that left nine soldiers wounded, including her handler. A rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) had exploded close to Sarbi, breaking the clip that attached her lead to her handler's body armour. It was the same battle where Trooper Mark Donaldson earned his Victoria Cross.

A US soldier knew his Australian mates were missing Sarbi, and spotted her wandering with an Afghan man near an isolated patrol base in north-eastern Oruzgan Province. Sarbi was flown to Tarin Kowt to be reunited with her Australian Special Forces trainer.

Sarbi was awarded the RSPCA Australian Purple Cross Award in April 2011 at a presentation at the Memorial.


**Dickin Medal for animals and birds**

The Dickin Medal, instituted by Mrs Maria Dickin, founder of the People’s Dispensary for Sick Animals in England, was popularly referred to as “the animals’ VC”. It was awarded to any animal displaying conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty associated with, or under the control of, any branch of the Armed Forces or Civil Defence units during World War II and its aftermath.

Two Australian pigeons were awarded the Dickin Medal in February 1947.

Image Caption: The Dickin medal— the Victoria Cross for animals— being awarded in 1947 to two Australian pigeons. AWM 132991.

**Pigeons**

Pigeons were used in great numbers during the First World War. However, as technology, including the radar, wireless and telephone, had greatly advanced since then, by 1939 it was thought that pigeons would no longer be required. Nonetheless, it was soon realised that this equipment could still fail in certain situations and message-carrying pigeons were reinstated as an alternative.
In 1942, the threat of enemy invasion of Australia led civilian pigeon-fanciers to voluntarily establish a network that could carry messages in the event that radio contact failed. Later that year the Australian Corps of Signals Pigeon Service was established. It was soon realised that the successful Pigeon Service might also be of use to the Army overseas in the South-West Pacific. The birds could fly over the tropical oceans, mountains and jungle that were proving to be considerable impediments to the Signal Corps’ usual communications methods.

The 8th Australian Pigeon Section was sent to Port Moresby in December 1942 to support operations on the Kokoda Trail. The pigeons were trained to carry a message for up to 120 miles (193 km) at an average speed of 30 miles per hour (48km/hr). They were particularly useful in emergency situations when no other method of communication was available.

Image caption:
Corporal G.R. Rayner of No.3 Section (HQ) Carrier Pigeon Unit No.17 Loft, reading a message removed from the container seen on the bird’s leg. AWM 050781.

- Horses used in the First World War (Walers)

Walers were the type of horse used by light horsemen in the campaign in the Middle East during the First World War. The light horse combined the mobility of cavalry with the fighting skills of infantry. They fought dismounted, with rifles and bayonets. However, sometimes they charged on horseback, notably at Magdhaba and Beersheba. The smallest unit of a light horse regiment was the four-man section: one holding the horses while the other three fought.

The horses were called Walers because, although they came from all parts of Australia, they were originally sold through New South Wales. They were sturdy, hardy horses, able to travel long distances in hot weather with little water.

Horses usually need to drink about 30 litres of water a day. However, during the campaign they often went for up to 60 hours without water, while carrying a load of almost 130 kilograms, comprising rider, saddle, equipment, food, and water.

At the end of the First World War Australians had 13,000 surplus horses which could not be returned home for quarantine reasons. Of these, 11,000 were sold, the majority as remounts for the British Army in India (as was the case with this horse) and two thousand were cast for age or infirmity.

Image caption:
The last great charge at Beersheba

Beersheba was a heavily fortified town 43 kilometres from the Turkish bastion of Gaza. It anchored the right end of a defensive line that stretched from Gaza on the Mediterranean coast.

The first two frontal attacks on Gaza, in March and April 1917, failed. The British Army re-organised before trying again. The capture of Beersheba would break the Gaza—Beersheba line and enable the British, Australian and New Zealand forces to outflank Gaza.

The British 20 Corps launched an attack on Beersheba at dawn on 31 October 1917. By late afternoon the corps had made little headway toward the town and its vital wells. Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel, commanding the Desert Mounted Corps, ordered the 4th Light Horse Brigade forward to attempt to secure the position.

Brigadier General William Grant responded by ordering light horsemen of the 4th and 12th Regiments to charge at the unwired Turkish trenches. The light horsemen did not carry swords or lances, so they held their bayonets in their hands and used them as "swords". The momentum of the surprise attack carried them through the Turkish defences.

The light horsemen took less than an hour to overrun the Turkish trenches and enter Beersheba. Thirty-eight Turkish and German officers and about 700 other ranks were taken prisoner, and a supply of water was secured.

The Australians suffered 67 casualties. Two officers and 29 other ranks were killed, and 8 officers and 28 other ranks wounded.

The fall of Beersheba opened the way to outflank the Gaza—Beersheba Line. On 6 November, after severe fighting, Turkish forces began to withdraw from Gaza further into Palestine.

Image caption:
Horses from the Desert Mounted Corps at Beersheba drinking from portable canvas water troughs.
AWM 045424