

## Upper Murray ANZACS

### Men and their mounts

Artist Simon White`s mural tells the story of the bush horses or brumbies and the stockmen who mustered and brought the horses down from the High Country and the bus-covered hills surrounding the Upper Murray before the First World War. The breeders of the Remounts and Walers often turned the young horses out into the bush to toughen them up and brought them back in as four-year-olds for sale to the Army buyers. The brumbies were often the bush horses that evaded muster to remain in the bush.

The painting is about the stockmen who became Light Horsemen and the bush horses that became the Remounts and Walers. Skerry, the Aboriginal stockman was one of the best stockmen and it is unlikely that he would have missed mustering the horses. The scenes depicting the horses being mustered from the hills might resemble the narrative in Banjo Paterson`s poem `The Man from Snowy River` :

He was right among the horses as the climbed the farther hill,  
And the watchers on the mountain, standing mute,  
Saw him ply the stockwhip fiercely ; he was right among them still  
As he raced across the clearing in pursuit.  
Then they lost him for a moment, where two mountain gullies met in the ranges – but a final glimpse  
reveals om a dim and distant hillside the wild horses racing yet,  
With the man from the Snowy River at their heels.

With few other forms of entertainment stockmen recited Paterson`s poems among other bush verses as they rode around their cattle and sat around their campfires. After the outbreak of the First World War Angus and Robertson`s pocket-sized anthologies of Banjo Paterson`s, C. J. Dennis`s and Will H Ogilvie`s poetry were popular with the AIF serving on both the Western Front and in the Middle East. As poet and Light Horseman Paterson was commissioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Remount Unit (Queensland and New South Wales) on 18 October 1915 and commanded the 2<sup>nd</sup> Remount Unit at Moascar in Egypt where he added both his equestrian skills and poetry to the lives of the Light Horse and other units serving in the Middle East.

Simon White has written a verse of `The Man from Snowy River` beneath the scene of the mustering of the bush horses – it could just as well be written through the sand in Egypt, Sinai and Palestine and across the battlefields of the Western Front.

The Light Horse reached its zenith in Sinai and Palestine in the scenes depicted along the fence behind the RSL Hall. Meanwhile Simon White reveals the increasing mechanisation of warfare in his portrayal of a car from the 1<sup>st</sup> Light Car Patrol ; tanks were used for the first time in Palestine in the Second battle of Gaza in 1917, and the fledgling 1<sup>st</sup> Squadron Australian Air Corps` planes that were used increasingly throughout the Palestine campaign.

The mural`s final scene depicts a Light Horseman`s homecoming to the family farm.

The Corryong and District Memorial Hall wish to thank `Murray Pnh` and `DVA Saluting Their Service` for their financial support.

Lest We Forget