

Bassendean volunteers celebrate proud history

The iconic black and white dalmatian dog has an interesting connection with the Bassendean Volunteer Fire and Rescue Service (VFRS) which has been protecting the local community for a hundred years.

Back in the days when firefighters would rush to the scene of a fire with a large hose reel towed by horses, two dalmatians named *Sixpence* and *Ha'penny* would be hot on their heels. They would run between the horse teams to scare away other dogs and keep watch to make sure no equipment was stolen. When the horses were at a scene for hours they also helped to keep them calm.

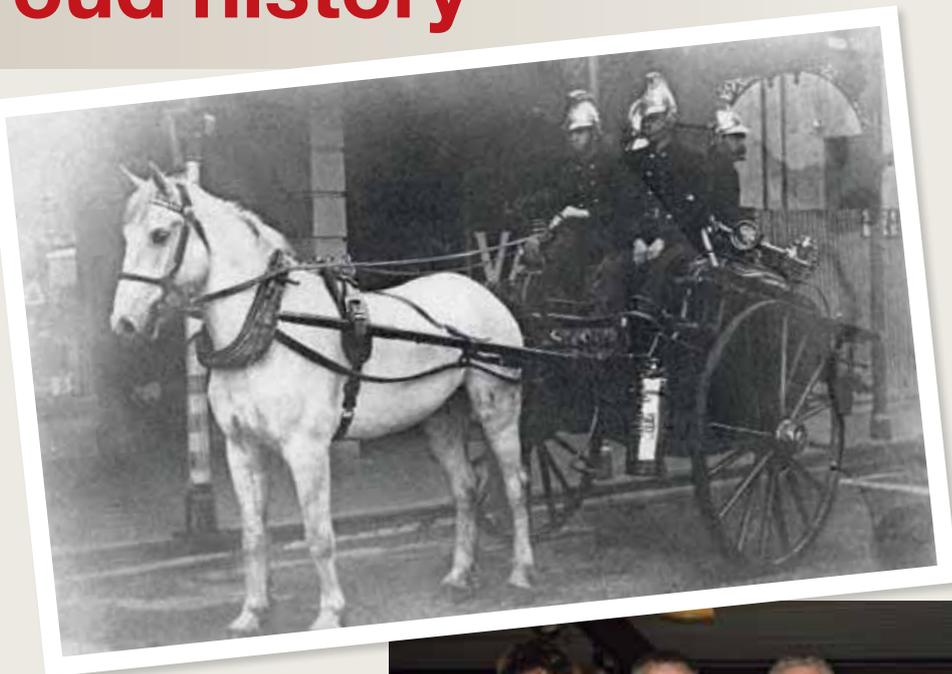
It is not surprising that a great bond developed between both the animals and firefighters from the West Guildford brigade, later known as Bassendean. Since the brigade was established in January 1911 much has changed in Bassendean, but the strong commitment and loyalty of the volunteer firefighters remains the same. The members recently marked their 100 year milestone with a celebratory dinner where they reminisced about the good times.

Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes congratulated the Bassendean VFRS on their continuous professionalism and dedication across ten decades. "It is incredible to think that hundreds of civic spirited volunteers have served the brigade and attended countless incidents over such a long period of time," Craig said.

"This centenary is a tremendous achievement and a credit to all those volunteers who have devoted their time, skill and energy to the brigade and community.

"Congratulations go to the volunteers and thanks to the many family members and friends whose support and encouragement is greatly appreciated."

Member for Swan Hills Frank Albans MLA, who was representing Premier



Colin Barnett, thanked brigade volunteers for their valuable contribution.

"Bassendean's volunteer firefighters, past and present, should be commended for their dedication to safeguarding the community over so many years," Mr Albans said.

"Volunteer brigades like Bassendean have a long and proud history, and are rightly held in high esteem by their communities.

"They are particularly rare in the Perth metropolitan area, so this milestone is a memorable and historic occasion."

Three Bassendean volunteer firefighters, who have each devoted more than 50 years of service to the brigade, received special mention at the celebration.

They were members Norm Stagoll, Bob Stoner and Roy Weatherburn. Norm and Roy shared stories of past incidents and championship competitions on the night, while Bob, who was in hospital, sent a note reminding guests that Bassendean remains the most successful volunteer brigade in Australia in terms of state level championship competition. In fact, the brigade again took out the mantle of State Champion Team at this year's annual Easter contest.

When formed, the West Guildford Volunteer Fire Brigade consisted of 15



Bassendean VFRS member Brandon McKinlay, Captain Mike Smith and Chief Operations Officer Craig Hynes cut the centenary cake.

firefighters. If more hands were needed, two lads rode around on a bike or horse to rally crews to turn out to fire calls. They were also responsible for looking after the fire station animals.

The brigade's name changed to Bassendean Volunteer Fire Brigade in 1922 and 1934 saw it move to a new fire station in Parker Street.

Bassendean's 60 current members still operate from the same spot today, providing a welcome boost to fire and rescue services in the vicinity and further afield when needed.

The brigade has attended more than 30 incidents this year, including assisting at February's major bushfire at Red Hill and the Avon storms in January.