

POLICE DOG “SALEM”

SALEM is a current operational General Purpose Police Dog attached to the Victoria Police Dog Squad. He is the most experienced police dog currently performing duties at the Victoria Police Dog Squad.

SALEM was part of the Dog Squad's "S" litter, born on 10 February 1999. He was bred as part of the Victoria Police Dog Squad breeding program and both his parents were also working police dogs.

His father Police Dog RUGER (Czaraust Fleetwood) is best remembered for bringing conclusion to a siege at the corner of Flinders/Swanston Streets in Melbourne, where a disturbed male was threatening onlookers with a large sword. His mother Police Bitch ISHKA (an Otti Van De Badhoeve daughter) was a successful Explosives Detector Dog and brood bitch for their breeding program.

Apart from SALEM that same litter produced another General Purpose Police Dog, “SILKY”, who was previously awarded a GSDCA Canine Outstanding Service Award, which was presented at the 34th National Show and Trial held in Melbourne. They also had a sister in that same litter that qualified in the field of Drug Detection.

Police Dog Salem was issued to Senior Constable (S/C) Wayne McNAMARA in October 2000 and they qualified as a General Purpose Police Dog Team in March 2001. Since then, SALEM has been responsible for several hundred arrests of offenders for offences including Attempted Murder, Rape, Burglaries, Thefts and Assaults.

He has brought a safe end to many tense situations involving offenders armed with varied weapons including firearms and knives. He fearlessly and reliably protects his handler whilst performing his duty and it is hoped that he will continue to do so for some time yet.

Apart from his outstanding policing duties, GSDCV members will recall that SALEM was the Police Dog they sponsored for two years with regard to the “Bluey Day Police Dog Challenge” in which our membership raised over \$10,000 to assist children dealing with childhood cancers.

In September 2007, S/C McNAMARA accepted a position as a narcotic detector dog handler, and after 7 years SALEM was reissued to S/C Harold BONIWELL and then finally in March 2009, he was issued to his current handler, S/C Wayne GATT.

S/C GATT and SALEM continue to enjoy great success and as a team have been responsible for many arrests already, including the high profile arrests earlier this year of several offenders in a rail yard who turned on SALEM with a baseball bat. SALEM courageously stayed with the offenders and indeed subdued them until help arrived. After receiving emergency treatment at Werribee Veterinary Hospital he returned to full duty.

This wasn't the first time SALEM had been attacked with a baseball bat. In early 2002, he was chasing several offenders from a school burglary when one of the males produced a bat and hit the dog several times. SALEM was recalled to the handler, and after checking his welfare the dog then tracked through several streets and located the offenders hiding amongst bushes in a front yard.

SALEM has also been used on many occasions to search for missing persons. One elderly female suffering from dementia was located by SALEM lying in blackberry bushes with cuts and torn clothing, after being missing for several hours. Grave fears were held for her safety and it was likely she would not have been located if not for SALEM's keen sense of smell. A jogger near Daylesford was lost in state forest on a cold winters night wearing only jogging shorts and a singlet. He was located by SALEM late into the night, extremely cold but otherwise ok.

In 2008, SALEM developed a cancerous tumour on his tail, which eventually required the removal of about 50% of the tail.



He has recovered well and to date has had no further reoccurrences. During that same year he was also awarded the Canine Service Medal for Five Years Aggregated Service, by the Australian Defence Force Trackers & War Dogs Association.

At 10 1/2 years old he is still in amazingly good condition and is very likely to become the longest serving police dog in Victoria's history should he remain in service until the end of next year (2010).

SALEM displays all the outstanding attributes that one admires in a police dog, he has assisted in bringing hundreds of offenders to justice, he has shown courage and loyalty in protecting his handlers, saved missing persons, defused violent confrontations and overcome physical attacks and illness to continues to effectively serve the Victorian community as he approaches the twilight of his career.

(From material supplied by Acting Senior Sergeant Shaun McGOVERN)