

The Animals' War,
14 July 2006 – 22 April 2007
Imperial War Museum, London

Many of our readers who might be visiting the UK would no doubt like to attend this very special exhibition. THE ANIMAL'S WAR exhibition is a timely reminder and very humbling experience to witness the important part animals have played alongside the armed forces during the various conflicts from the First World War to the present day, a subject that is sure to stir the passions of the visitors but somehow the exhibition has managed to sensitively represent how animals fulfilled their role and show the bonds that were forged with their human partners. They are Britain's forgotten heroes no longer, finally honoured by means of this exhibition which is also partly dedicated to the memories of the countless animals that gave their lives or suffered in the various conflicts.

It is estimated that 16 million animals served during the First World War - by 1916 alone the warring nations had raised 103 cavalry divisions with over a million horses. Despite increasing mechanisation and advances in technology, animals have continued to play their part in the front line. Mules, elephants, camels, horses and other beasts have transported men and materiel in difficult terrain. In the Second World War over 200,000 carrier pigeons were used by Britain's armed forces and secret service organisations. Dogs have guarded military personnel and property, located injured soldiers, tracked down enemy insurgents and sniffed out explosives.

More recently rats and pigs have also been trained to clear minefields and the dolphin's sensitive sonar has been exploited to identify mines in the Persian Gulf. The Animals' War uses photographs, film, sculptures, memorabilia and interactive features to explore the intriguing and often surprising stories of animals in war.

Animals of many kinds from dogs and cats, to lions and eagles have also been adopted officially and unofficially as pets and mascots by the armed forces. A number of these will be featured in the exhibition including Rin Tin Tin, who was found as a puppy on the Western Front and went on to become a Hollywood legend; Judy, the pointer, the only animal to have been officially registered as a Japanese prisoner of war; Voytek, the bear mascot of the 22nd Transport Company of the Polish Army Service Corps who saw action at Monte Cassino in 1944; and Simon of HMS Amethyst, the only cat to have been awarded the PDSA Dickin Medal known as the 'animals' Victoria Cross.' Dickin Medals on display will include those awarded to two police horses during the V1 Flying Bomb Offensive of 1944 and to Buster, the spaniel, who located a cache of arms in Iraq in 2003.

'Jake' the Metropolitan police dog deployed to Tavistock Square and Kings Cross in the wake of the 7 July terrorist bombings in London was one of a number of animals which joined Jilly Cooper, author and patron of the Park Lane Animals in War Memorial, at the launch of the exhibition. Hubble Keck, (pet name 'Jake'), and his handler PC Crawford saved the lives of several badly injured people on board the devastated bus in Tavistock Square shortly after the terrorist attacks by securing a route through the debris for the explosives officer to reach what was then thought to be a second explosive device. This allowed the emergency services access to provide urgently needed medical assistance. Jake was then tasked to clear an area close to the bus so a make-shift field hospital could be set up, before he and PC Crawford were deployed to Kings Cross to search the mile-long route from Russell Square tube station to the train at Kings Cross and the train itself. Jake's story is just one of many remarkable accounts featured which explores the role of animals in conflict from the First World War to the present day.

Also attending was Endal, a yellow Labrador and Assistance Dog to 1991 Gulf War Veteran Allen Parton. It was a very poignant occasion for Allen who had proudly served Queen and country in the Royal Navy for some twenty years. A severe head injury sustained while on active duty in the 1991 Gulf War changed his life beyond recognition. "I read a famous saying in the museum" said Allen "War only ends for the dead". It hit such a raw note with me because everyday I wake up I am reminded of my war and the price paid for the freedoms we all enjoy today. Life is far too short though to be dwelling on the what ifs? and why me? mentality. I am so lucky to have survived and owe it now to all those that have helped me along the way by living every second of my life to the max, Endal is certainly ensuring that much - his zest for life leaves no wasted time in my life! A visit to the IWM does cause one to quietly reflect on life and it's value. Not a bad thing".

Visiting the IWM as an ex modern day weapon electronic engineering officer and seeing the various equipment displays Allen said "it is just so amazing to see what basic equipment our predecessors had to fight with and yet achieved so much"

Also present was Buster, the Royal Army Veterinary Corps search dog, who received a PDSA Dickin Medal for locating a hidden cache of arms, explosives and bomb-making equipment in Iraq in March 2003. Regimental Mascots attending included Imphal and Quebec, ferrets adopted by The 1st Battalion Yorkshire Regiment; Shenkin II, a Royal Windsor White goat and mascot of the 3rd Royal Welsh Regiment, and the Shetland Pony, Cruachan III, mascot of The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders.

HMS AMETHYST veteran, Lieutenant Commander Keir Stewart Hett MBE RN, 'Cat Officer' to the ship's cat Simon was also at the launch. Simon is the only cat to have been awarded the PDSA Dickin Medal for 'behaviour of the highest order.' Despite being wounded during the 1949 Yangtze Incident, he both kept up the crew's morale and kept down the ship's rat population.

The exhibition uses photographs, film, sculptures, memorabilia and interactive features to explore the intriguing and often surprising stories of animals in war. An accompanying exhibition book, The Animals' War, written by the historian Juliet Gardiner, with a foreword by Jilly Cooper, published by Portrait, is priced at £20.00. A children's book, Animals at War by Isabel George and Rob Lloyd Jones, published by Usborne is priced at £4.99.

The Animals' War will transfer to IWM North in Manchester in summer 2007. For much more, please visit WWW.IWM.ORG.UK/ANIMALS



top left, An Australian demonstrates the docility of his camel, Sudan, 1917

top right, A lance corporal of the Household Cavalry and his horse wearing gas masks, 1939

above, Horse-drawn water cart, Ypres 1917

left, Circus elephants moving a wrecked car, Hamburg, 1945

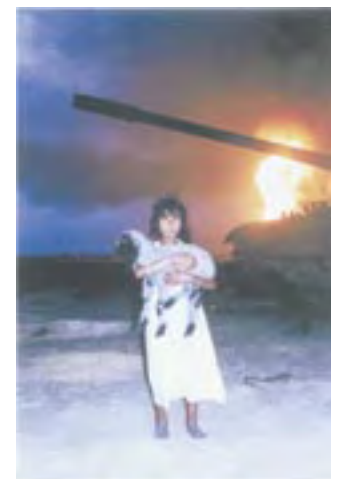
below right, Bedouin girl with lamb in Kuwait, taken shortly after the first Gulf War, 1991



above, A carrier pigeon being released from a port-hole in the side of a British tank, 1918. right, Staff Sgt. Steve Hoyle of the 3 reg Army Air Corps (AAC) 16 Air Assault Brigade (background) takes aim alongside pigeon named "Harry" in southern Iraq. *..A pigeon was accidentally shipped to Iraq in a consignment of ration packs was liberated by the Quartermasters of 3 reg AAC when they opened their latest supplies.



left, K-Dog a Bottle Nose Dolphin belonging to Commander Task Unit (CTU-55.4.3) leaps out of the water in front of Sergeant Andrew Garrett while training near the USS Gunston Hall (LSD 44) operating in the Arabian Gulf, March 18, 2003. This is a multinational team consisting of Naval Special Clearance Team-One, Fleet Diving Unit Three from the United Kingdom, Clearance Dive Team from Australia, and Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Units Six and Eight. These units are conducting deep/shallow water mine counter measure operations to clear shipping lanes for humanitarian relief.



left, A Gambian giant pouch rat (*Cricetomys Gambianus*) receives the scent of a suspected anti-personnel mine in a minefield near the town of Vilancoulos, 450 km north east of the capital Maputo in southern Mozambique, November 9, 2004. The rats are trained from an early age to associate the scent of explosives with a food reward and indicate the suspected presence of explosives by grooming and scratching the earth. Picture taken November 9, 2004

below, Kitten mascot of the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle at the time of the Suez Expedition, 1956

The threat of gas attacks, the blackout and air raids brought pets into the front line in the Second World War. During the first four days of the war, anxious owners in the Greater London area had 400,000 cats and dogs destroyed. The National Air Raid Precautions for Animals Committee, which was established in 1939 by charities including the RSPCA, PDSA, The Blue Cross, and Canine Defence League, set up rescue centres and clinics to care for pets. Between 1939 and 1945 over a quarter of a million pets were rescued after air raids.

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