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Animals

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During the First World War millions of animals were utilised for war work, and creatures great and small were a day-to-day part of most soldiers' lives. Horses, dogs, and pigeons were used extensively in communication and transportation roles, whilst mascots and pets provided troops with a touchstone to reality and helped to maintain morale. Some of these animals were provided in an official capacity, whilst others were adopted unofficially by men or units to carry out specific roles. Animals also appeared in unwanted ways, with pests such as rats, flies, and lice a constant source of anguish. Although animals have been used in warfare for millennia, the First World War was the first conflict where animals were widely veteranised and their contribution memorialised alongside that of humans. This article explores the uses of animals across belligerent nations, the stories of specific "animal heroes" and the memory and cultural perceptions of animals in the First World War.

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Introduction

Until relatively recently the topic of animals during the First World War had received limited academic attention. Aside from memoirs and a handful of key texts written in the post-war period, little was written on the subject until the 1980s. During this period Michael Morpurgo's novel *War Horse* captured the public's imagination and the Imperial War Museum published Jilly Cooper's *Animals in War*, which emotively described the war work of horses, pigeons, and dogs for the general reader![1] However, scholarly work on the animal contribution remained limited. An exception to this was increasing interest in the role of the cavalry, which placed greater emphasis on the horse's contribution to ensuring the mobility of the British army in particular![2]

Whilst the role of animals is rarely mentioned in general histories, the development of animal studies over the past twenty years has seen a growth in scholarly work on the topics of animals in war, especially in regard to horses and dogs.[3] This article will provide an overview of the role of these animals in war work along with camels, birds, and other creatures. It will also cover the stories of several famous mascots and discuss aspects of the legacy of the animal contribution. The use of animals in the First World War is a vast topic and the supply and veterinary care of these animals varied across nations. Whilst this article will touch on these areas, the focus will be on the roles and uses of animals, rather than remount and veterinary services. It is also worth noting that the availability of primary source information varies from nation to nation, with information from Russia and Turkey being particularly sparse.

Equines

By far the greatest animal contribution in the First World War was made by equines. Horses, mules, and donkeys were used in a range of roles by all nations; most notably as draught animals to transport military supplies and artillery. They were also used in combat roles as part of the cavalry, as well as part of the casualty evacuation chain to move the wounded, and in roles on the home front to provide mobility to the war industry. The total number of equines that perished in the war is difficult to calculate, since record keeping of animal deaths was often irregular. A figure of 8 million is widely used by organisations and charities today, but this has ambiguous supporting evidence. Primary source documentation suggests a figure of 5-6 million is more likely.[4]

Horses

Whilst it is widely acknowledged that equines played a vital role in the First World War, the popular narrative is often over sentimentalised and has been heavily influenced by wider mythologies of mud, blood, and futility as defined by historian Dan Todman.[5] This is in part a result of the changing place of equines within society. In the 21st century horses in Europe are primarily used for recreational purposes or kept as pets, whereas in the early 20th century they mainly occupied utilitarian roles as working animals.[6] As the horse's place in society has changed, so too have people's perceptions of its role during the First World War.

Although the animal rights movement was growing in the early 1900s, the death of equines as a result of work was commonplace across Europe – something that many would find unacceptable today. However, in Britain the incredibly high horse wastage (deaths) suffered by the British army during the Boer War pushed the boundaries of what was acceptable.[7] This led to sweeping reforms of the British army's veterinary and remount services to improve the lifespan and care of equines in its service. The impact of these reforms is evident in the fact that the British army lost far fewer animals in the First World War compared to Germany, France, and Austria-Hungary.[8]

Veterinary services in the French army had limited resources and failed to adequately deal with contagious diseases, leading to many deaths. Additionally, there was a culture of poor horsemastership within the army which resulted in veterinary services having to deal with many easily preventable injuries.[9] The British charity, the Blue Cross, provided ancillary support to the French veterinary service, helping to raise the standards of care and fund veterinary hospitals. This financial support was extended to Italy, which suffered relatively low wastage rates due to veterinarians receiving excellent training at the Military Veterinary Academy, *Scuola del Servizio Veterinario Militare*.[10] Conversely, Germany entered the war with no veterinary hospitals whatsoever which severely hampered the ability to provide treatment to sick animals early on in the conflict.[11] This is surprising given that despite the expanding use of mechanical transport in the run up to the war, the armies of all belligerent nations were still dependent on equines to move artillery, troops, and materiel.

In the pre-war period European armies had taken different approaches as to how equines would be supplied to meet the constant and increasing demand during war. Britain sought to secure access to the international horse market, whilst Germany and France focused on developing their traditional domestic breeding schemes.[12] The French and German equine requirement was far greater than that of Britain, and both nations faced difficulties with maintaining remount supply during the war. For the French, their poorly organised remount services meant the supply chain was slow and whilst Germany had a superior breeding programme and large equine reserves, as the war progressed stocks dwindled and their inability to import animals from abroad caused severe supply problems.[13] In the case of the British army, the growth in equine requirement is demonstrated by the fact that on the outbreak of war the Army Service Corps was providing fodder for 28,742 animals but by 1918 this figure had risen to 895,000.[14] The United States became Britain's most important equine supplier, with a cargo of between 500 and 1,000 animals on average leaving the U.S. for Europe every 1.5 days between 1914-1918.

Horses of different breeds, sizes, and strengths were used for different duties.[15] The majority of horses were heavy and light draught types, favoured to move artillery and supplies. Whilst heavy draught breeds such as shires and clydesdales provided greater pulling power, they required far more fodder and were more susceptible to mud borne and respiratory diseases.[16] Thus, in many cases, where logistics were challenging or environmental conditions particularly poor, using light draught or hunter types was preferred. These animals provided a balance between strength, hardiness, and mobility, to allow armies to move weapons and supplies over difficult terrain in challenging conditions. On the Eastern Front, small but tough native breeds such as the panje were used by German and Russian forces, as they were better able to withstand cold conditions and reduced access to fodder. Ensuring that animals with the correct abilities were chosen was important for military efficiency, since the work was both physically and mentally demanding. A six horse light draught artillery team, for example, was expected to haul in the region of 1.5 tons of guns, lumber, saddlery, and ammunition, and all animals had to get used to the unnatural environment of the battlefield. Sidney Galtrey argued that the most successful horse of the war was the percheron, a highly nimble breed that is strong in the neck and quarters but relatively short in the leg and back. Percherons are quick learners and known for their calm nature, making them well suited to draught duties.[17]

The specific requirements for cavalry mounts varied nation to nation, but in the main, agile animals over fifteen hands tall with good conformation were best suited to provide a mix of speed and endurance. It is a common myth that the cavalry were obsolete on the Western Front. In fact, they played an important role, and other ridden horses were vital for maintaining mobility and communications.[18] In Sinai and Palestine, more traditional cavalry tactics were used by the Allies to great effect, in part thanks to the endurance and good condition of the Egyptian Expeditionary Forces' mounts. The majority of these animals were walers – a hardy breed supplied from Australia. Walers were bred for work in the outback and proved far more resilient to the hot and dry conditions in Egypt and Palestine. The heat was also an issue in the most arduous campaign for horses during the war – that of German East Africa. In this area, many animals succumbed to endemic disease such as African Horse Sickness, spread by Tsetse fly, with a small number of Abyssinian ponies secured by the British army the only equines that appeared immune to the illness. The protracted engagement was the costliest in terms of equine casualties for the British and Commonwealth forces, with only 827 horses out of 31,000 surviving the four-year conflict.[19]

On the home front, horses were essential to the continued functioning of agricultural industries. With Germany largely unable to access the international horse market, many animals had to be requisitioned domestically, depriving farms of their draught animals and causing a huge drop in food production. In Britain, authorities could be more selective with requisition and animals deemed essential to farming or industry were largely exempt. These horses played an important role in ensuring that food supply and transport in Britain continued to operate.

The actions of horses in the First World War are often personified with stories of heroic and brave steeds which continue to capture the public's imagination today. During the war these stories served to bolster morale among troops and civilians and even became propaganda tools, with horses used as a symbol of good triumphing over evil. One of the most famous examples of the equine-soldier bond is that of General Jack Seely (1868-1947), commander of the Canadian Cavalry Brigade, and his horse Warrior. They served together throughout the war, with Seely documenting their exploits in his 1934 book *My Horse Warrior*.[20] Warrior took part in many of the First World War's most famous battles, escaping near death on multiple occasions, becoming known as the "horse the Germans couldn't kill".[21]

Although often embellished, the stories of soldiers and their horses highlight the importance of the equine-soldier bond during the war. A regular feature in soldier memoirs, the relationship between men and animals was deeply important to individual morale and military operations.[22] This could affect men in both positive and negative ways. In *All Quiet on the Western Front* German soldier Erich Remarque (1898-1970) describes the noise of wounded horses as “unendurable”.[23] Like other writers in the post-war period, Remarque discusses the suffering of horses in terms of innocence and inhumanity, highlighting the role that horses played in the reinvigoration of modernism and helping people make sense of the war.

Mules

The contribution of mules in the First World War is often overlooked. Their unique hybrid attributes mean that they are able to do more work on less food than horses and are more resilient to sickness and injury, making them ideal for transporting food and munitions under harsh conditions.[24] Though long valued by the American, Indian, and Italian armies, they were initially deemed unsuitable for widespread use by the British army.[25] However, as it became more difficult to acquire light draught horses, the British army began replacing many draught horses with mules with great success.

On the Italian Front, mules were depended upon for pack transport in the mountains. In an example of their capabilities during the Austrian offensive, twenty mules of one battalion worked eighteen hours a day for eight days, transporting 500 screwed pickets, 600 rolls of wire, 240 tins of water at four dumps, and 4,000 gallons of water and rations.[26] They became viewed not only as comrades to the Alpini, but also often as the only tangible link between home and the inhospitable environment in which they fought.[27] Their resilience and propensity to thrive on hard work were seen as characteristics reflective of the Alpini themselves, and they remained in service with the mountain infantry until the 1990s.

On the Western Front, mules were better equipped to cope with the mud and wet, their nimbleness allowing them to traverse small tracks up to the front line, whilst in Gallipoli mules from the Indian army’s mountain batteries were adept at climbing the craggy cliffsides. The largest mule contribution in Gallipoli was made by the Zion Mule Corps, a unit of the British army raised in March 1915 by Jewish refugees who had fled Ottoman-held Palestine.[28] Also engaged in fighting against the Ottoman empire was the Cypriot Mule Corps (sometimes referred to as the Macedonian Mule Corps), formed in the summer of 1916 to work ferrying supplies, ammunition, and the wounded for French and British forces on the Salonica front.[29]

Though the mule’s distinct personality traits were sometimes the cause of frustration, once trained to understand the different handling they required compared to horses, soldiers often came to appreciate their intelligence and independence of thought.[30]

Donkeys

Mules inherit their surefootedness from donkeys, which were also used as pack animals across all fronts. They are capable of carrying up to three times their own body weight and were most commonly used in hot and/or mountainous terrain, such as at Gallipoli and on the Sinai, Palestine, and Italian fronts. Their small size meant they were sometimes used in trenches on the Western Front too, the most famous example of which is Jimmy. Jimmy was reportedly born on the Somme and adopted by the 1st battalion of the Cameronian Scottish Rifles. He worked carrying ammunition, regimental supplies, and even the wounded, and in exchange was well looked after by the troops who taught him tricks and shared their rations with him. Jimmy returned to the U.K. after the war where he was adopted by the branch secretary of the Peterborough RSPCA and used to raise money for the charity.[31] Though the authenticity of Jimmy’s story has been questioned, it is true that donkeys were common mascots due to their docile personalities.

Dogs

Dogs were used by most European armies (including the Russian army, although their official use was short lived) in a variety of roles, from carrying messages and medical supplies, to undertaking draught and sentry work.

In Belgium, dogs had been used as draught animals for many centuries, with breeds such as the Belgian Mastiff bred specifically for the purpose.[32] Many of these animals were requisitioned during the war for use in the Belgian army to pull

machine gun carts. Dog traction was more flexible and cheaper to maintain than horses/mules, allowing for weapons to be moved rapidly across any terrain. Italian and Austro-Hungarian forces took advantage of this to support soldiers in the hostile mountainous regions of the Italian Front. Pulling carts and sleds, the hardy Maremma dogs helped to keep the Alpini supplied in freezing conditions, whilst Austria-Hungary relied on dogs to compensate for a lack of suitable draught equines.[33]

Draught dogs were also used by the French army, as well as messenger and search and rescue dogs. The French militarisation of dogs was more disorganised than that of Germany and Belgium, relying on initiatives from the National Society of Rescue Dogs (NSRD) and individual units developing their own kennels.[34] It was not until December 1915 that the *Service des Chiens de Guerre* (War Dogs Service) was officially approved and centralised. Most notably in the French army, “ambulance dogs” assisted in the search for wounded men on the battlefields. They carried a small box containing basic first aid materials and were taught to tear a piece of soldier’s uniform or carry his cap back to the kennels. They would then lead medics to the injured soldier.[35] Using dogs for a similar purpose was trialled by the British army but the use of these “Red Cross dogs” was not formally adopted, as it was found that the dog’s Red Cross markings were often ignored by enemy soldiers and casualty rates were high.[36] It was the dog’s keen sense of smell and hearing that made them useful to seek out wounded soldiers and these abilities were also utilised in their role as sentries, helping to keep watch for enemy raiding parties or snipers. This was invaluable across all fronts, especially at night when human senses were dulled. For their service, these animals became much loved by the men they worked with, which is reflected in the number of dog mascots that were either adopted by or accompanied regiments and individuals to war.

Messenger dogs were utilised most successfully by the German army; in 1914 they had around 6,000 trained service dogs, the largest number in the world. As well as carrying correspondence between front and rear areas, they were also used to lay telephone cables with specially designed cable reels and to carry ammunition. Dogs were recruited throughout the war with appeals in newspapers for owners of German Shepherds, Doberman Pinschers, and Airedales to volunteer their dogs to “serve the Fatherland”. These breeds were preferred for their obedience, courage, and hardiness.[37] They also played an important role in regard to morale, with German soldier Robert Hohlbaum (1886-1955) noting “in the days when the world was shaking, a loving dog's bark gave us more than the wisest words of man.”[38]

The British War Dog School was established relatively late, in 1917 by Lieutenant Colonel Edwin Hautenville Richardson (1863-1948). After trialling the use of Airedale terriers to carry messages back and forth from the front line when communication via telephone was difficult, it was found that dogs were able to better navigate the shell-blown terrain and were far quicker than human messengers, with other breeds such as Collies and Irish/Welsh Terriers particularly adept at the work. A central kennel was established at Étaples, from where animals would be posted to sectional kennels staffed by keepers, who would usually be responsible for three dogs each. When their services were required, the dogs were taken up to the front line whilst their keepers remained at brigade headquarters to await their return with correspondence.[39]

Birds

Birds were prolific on the Western Front and are frequently mentioned in soldiers’ memoirs, from the sounds of skylarks singing on the morning of the first day of the Battle of the Somme, to chickens being kept by troops to supplement rations. Some birds were kept as mascots whilst others played more active roles in the war.

Pigeons

Pigeons have been used to transmit information during warfare for thousands of years. The homing ability and speed of the birds which can cover over 300 miles in one trip, travelling at speeds of up to 75mph, made them ideal for use in the First World War when telephone communication was not possible.[40] Birds were carried in mobile pigeon lofts or baskets and released with messages added to small canisters clipped to their legs. Used by both the navy and army, they provided essential communication links under challenging circumstances.

Approximately 100,000 pigeons were used by European and American governments throughout the war, boasting a delivery success rate of circa 95 percent. By 1914 the German, French, Belgian, and Turkish armies had all established a pigeon messenger service, with the French loaning fifty birds to the British headquarters for use for intelligence purposes only.[41] As

the war progressed, pigeon services were developed to improve communication between battlefields and command headquarters. The benefits were that these airborne messages were received more quickly than those carried on the ground, with pigeons rarely troubled by shell fire and easily replaced if killed. However, the birds required careful handling, training, and care to remain effective, which was sometimes difficult to maintain. In addition, they could not fly in periods of low visibility, for example at night or when it was foggy.[42]

The German army had 21,000 military pigeons stationed in homing lofts along its borders on the outbreak of war, with numbers expanding dramatically throughout the war. In contrast, the British army did not begin to centralise its pigeon service until 1915 under the control of Lieutenant Colonel Alfred Henry Osman (1864-1930). The birds were used extensively during many major offensives, including the Battle of the Somme, where in some areas they were the only form of battlefield communications.[43] In the U.S., military trials with homing pigeons were undertaken in 1878 but the army did not widely pursue their use until 1917 when Colonel Edgar Russel (1862-1925) – at the American Expeditionary Forces' (AEF) chief signal office – learnt of their effectiveness on the Western Front from British and French signal officers.[44]

One of the most famous pigeons of the war was a bird named Cher Ami, who was donated to the U.S. Signal Corps by British pigeon fanciers. The story is that Cher Ami was dispatched by Major Charles White Whittlesey (1884-1921), leader of the so called "Lost Battalion" of nine companies of the 77th Division U.S. Army who found themselves surrounded by German forces during the Battle of Meuse-Argonne. After two other pigeons had been shot down, Cher Ami successfully delivered a message to divisional headquarters twenty-five miles away in just twenty-five minutes despite being badly wounded during the journey. However, like many individual animal war stories, Cher Ami's story has been subject to much myth making and there is little primary source evidence to support the claim that he was the bird released by Whittlesey on that day.[45]

Other Birds

It was not just pigeons who played a part in the war – canaries were also used by both German and British miners in their traditional role of detecting subterranean gases. Canaries are fifteen times more sensitive to gas than humans, and during the war underground these birds played a vital role in alerting troops to the presence of gas before the onset of any ill effects.[46]

Canaries and songbirds were also used in ambulance trains to boost the morale of wounded soldiers and were sometimes kept as pets for similar reasons. Finally, the use of birds as sentries is worthy of mention. The French army trialled the use of parrots in Paris to provide early warning of approaching enemy aircraft, with the British army undertaking similar trials with pheasants in coastal regions. These trials proved ineffective however, as the birds became unreliable and were unable to tell the difference between allied and enemy aircraft.[47]

Camels

Camels were used extensively in the Middle East by both the Allies and Central Powers. They can carry heavy loads in desert conditions, covering up to seventy miles a day without water, qualities which were extremely useful for keeping military units mobile during the Sinai and Palestine campaigns. The German Empire's African formations (the *Schutztruppe*) had made use of camels since the 19th century in imperial conflicts, so too had the British army which expanded their camel regiments with the formation of the Imperial Camel Corps in 1916.[48] Armed with .303 Lee-Enfield rifles, the 3,000 strong Camel Corps were increasingly used in combat roles as well in their traditional uses of long-range patrol and scouting missions. The Ottoman army also had experienced cameliers among their ranks, often recruited from Arab subjects of the Ottoman Empire who had spent time with camels in civilian life.

Camels were sometimes the only form of transport across the desert and were even used to evacuate the wounded in specially designed cacolets.[49] Like equines, camels required specialist care to ensure they remained effective. Although they had a reputation for being ungainly and aggressive, those who worked with the beasts became incredibly fond of them, including Colonel T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935).

Other Animals

Many other creatures took part in the First World War. Some, like oxen, were traditional military animals, used by armies across the world for draught purposes long before equines. Whilst the majority of draught work was undertaken by horses and mules during the First World War, oxen were also occasionally used to draw heavy artillery pieces. Although their strength was advantageous, they were far slower than equines, ate far more, and had difficulty manoeuvring over muddy or uneven terrain.

Other animal contributors made less likely war workers. In Germany, Belgium, and Britain there were incidents of captive elephants being used to haul heavy loads. In Germany, zoos struggled to feed their animals and, with few horses left in the country, other animals were requisitioned for war work. In 1915 an elephant named Jenny and her keeper Matthias Walter from Hagenbeck Zoo travelled to the Western Front. Jenny worked felling trees, hauling traction engines and on one occasion leaning against the back of a sixty-tonne train to push it free – for which she was rewarded with ginger cake.[50] In Sheffield, England, Lizzie the elephant played a similar role. Part of William Sedgwick's (1865-1927) menagerie, Lizzie was loaned to scrap dealer Thomas Ward (1853-1926) to move steel and machinery to the city's foundries.[51]

Far smaller but equally as useful on the front line were cats. Thousands of cats lived in and among the trenches on the Western Front and on naval ships. They were often strays displaced by the war and adopted by men to work as ratters in exchange for food and shelter.[52]

Unwanted Animals

The problem of rats in the trenches is well documented. The environment was ideal for such pests as the often-unsanitary conditions encouraged the breeding of creatures capable of feeding from scraps and human remains. Journalist Herbert Warner Allen (1881-1968) reported in 1916 that the French army was offering a financial reward "for every dead rat brought in by men in the trenches, and regular battues have been organised. In a single fortnight one army corps alone has disposed of no fewer than eight thousand rats."[53] An even greater discomfort was caused by lice or "chats" as they were known, which bred in the seams of men's clothing. Lice would cause itching as they fed on men's blood and spread diseases such as Trench Fever – one of the most significant forms of illness among all armies.[54] Malaria was another insect borne disease that plagued men in hotter climates. It was the most frequent cause of sickness among men stationed at Gallipoli and Mesopotamia, the spread of which was exasperated by the lack of water and heat.[55]

Mascots

Although soldiers from all nations bonded with animals during the war, official mascots were most common in the British army, units of which had first adopted animals in the 18th century for ceremonial duties to strengthen esprit de corps and boost morale.[56] Whilst cats and dogs were the most commonplace mascots; birds, bears, goats, and monkeys accompanied units to the front lines. There were even lion mascots such as Whiskey and Soda, two cubs that were adopted by American pilots of the French air force unit the Lafayette Escadrille.[57]

Sergeant Stubby

Stubby was a stray dog which was adopted by Corporal James Conroy (1892-1987) of the 102nd Infantry Regiment (United States) whilst on a training exercise in Connecticut. He became the regiment's unofficial mascot and was smuggled on board ship when they departed for France in 1917. Upon discovery, he was allowed to remain with the regiment, as it was said he provided a morale boost to the newly arrived men of the American Expeditionary Forces. Although not a trained service dog, Stubby was known for undertaking sentry duties and other tasks on the frontline. On one occasion he reportedly alerted men to a German attack and apparently provided advance notice of gas attacks. It was even reported that Stubby discovered a German spy in the Argonne, holding him down until soldiers arrived to capture him. Stubby stayed with the 102nd throughout their engagements on the Western Front and was wounded in the leg at Seicheprey.[58]

After the war, Stubby's exploits became famous. He was decorated by General John J. Pershing (1860-1948), had his portrait painted by artist Charles Whipple (1859-1928), and met presidents Woodrow Wilson (1856-1934), Warren G. Harding (1865-1923), and Calvin Coolidge (1872-1933). When Stubby died in 1926 he was given a long obituary in the *New York Times*, and in

1956 his stuffed remains were placed on display at the Smithsonian.[59] Like many animal war heroes, his story has become symbolic of the wider sacrifice of his species.

Corporal Jackie

Jackie was a chacma baboon who was found and adopted as a baby byAlbert Marr (1889-1973), at his family farm just outside Pretoria, South Africa. When Marr joined the 3rd South African Infantry Regiment in 1915, he asked whether he could take Jackie with him, to which the officer commanding the regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Francis Thackeray (1870-1956), agreed. Jackie was well trained and, having been reared by Marr, had developed a remarkably human-like personality, making him popular among the regiment's men. He joined the regiment in drill as they trained (holding a wooden rifle and learning to salute as required). As the men formally enlisted, Jackie was adopted as the regiment's official mascot, receiving his own specially fitted uniform and even a pay book. The regiment saw active service in Egypt and on the Western Front, where Jackie accompanied Private Marr wherever he went. It was said that when Marr was on sentry duty, Jackie was able to give advance warning of enemy action with his keen vision and hearing. During the German Spring Offensive in 1918, the South African Infantry Brigade suffered a large number of casualties – of which Jackie was one. He received medical treatment but unfortunately had to have his leg amputated.

Nevertheless, Jackie and Marr survived the war and, on their return to Britain, Jackie was promoted to corporal. Like many animals, Jackie's fame was put to good use, as he and Marr toured with the Red Cross to raise funds for the charity.[60]

Winnipeg

In August 1914 trained veterinary surgeon and officer with the 34th Fort Garry Horse, Harry Colebourn (1887-1947), volunteered for service overseas. Due to his veterinary training he was transferred to the Canadian Army Veterinary Corps (CAVC) and asked to report to their base in Valcartier, Quebec. During the journey from Winnipeg, Colebourn purchased a black bear cub at a train stop in Ontario, christening her after his hometown. Colebourn's diaries show that "Winnie" accompanied him and the men of the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade overseas to England where they were to train before heading to France. During this time Winnie was kept at the brigade's headquarters near Salisbury Plain and was officially adopted as a mascot for the CAVC. Due to living her entire life in close contact with humans she was known to be incredibly tame and was viewed as a pet by many of the regiment's men. When the 2nd Canadian Infantry Brigade left for France in December 1914, Colebourn left Winnie in the care of the London Zoo.[61]

Her reputation as a friendly and trustworthy bear grew and she became a popular attraction, especially for youngchildren who were sometimes allowed inside her enclosure to feed her. Colebourn visited Winnie whenever he could whilst on leave, and though he originally intended to bring her back to Canada, at the end of the war he decided to leave her at London Zoo, where a plaque was erected to tell visitors of her story. One of Winnie's visitors was Christopher Milne (1920-1996), son of author A. A. Milne (1882-1956). Christopher was so fond of Winnie that he named his own stuffed bear after her, the inspiration for the famous Winnie the Pooh books.

Winnie died in 1934 at the age of twenty and has been memorialised in Winnipeg, Ontario, and London where her skull went on public display at the Hunterian Museum in 2015.[62]

Tirpitz

In March 1915 the German light cruiser *SMS Dresden* was scuttled during the battle of Battle of Más a Tierra just off the coast of Chile. Most of the crew managed to escape, along with a pig who had been kept on board to supply meat. The pig had managed to swim away from the sinking *SMS Dresden* and was rescued by an officer of the British ship *HMS Glasgow*. Originally named Dennis, the pig was adopted by the crew as *HMS Glasgow*'s official mascot and eventually renamed Tirpitz after German Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz (1849-1930). When the ship returned to Britain, Tirpitz took up residence at the royal navy's zoo on Whale Island in Portsmouth. Tirpitz, however, proved to be a rather rebellious prisoner of war, and after breaking into a chicken run she was rehomed and eventually auctioned by the Red Cross, raising 400 guineas for the charity.[63]

Myth and Memory

Animal charities such as the Blue Cross and RSPCA played an important role in caring for wounded animals during the war and increasing the public's awareness of animal suffering. Through fundraising efforts and press coverage, these organisations encouraged people to reconsider how animals returning from conflict should treated.

Animals were no longer widely considered disposable, and the question of what to do with the great many horses left in Europe, the Middle East, and Africa after the war was a matter of deep concern to the British public in particular. This was highlighted by the case of the ex-war horses of Egypt and the work of Dorothy Brooke (1883-1955).[64] In 1934 Brooke established the Old War Horse Memorial Hospital in Cairo after years of fundraising, to purchase neglected ex-warhorses that had been sold to the local population. The charity was later renamed The Brooke and continues its operations today as the largest equine charity in the world.[65] It was not just horses that were remembered in the post war period. The National Canine Defence League (NCDL) which had worked to support dogs during the conflict continued to do so after the war, providing medical care and finding new homes for ex-service dogs. Just like The Brooke, the NCDL continues its work today under a new name, the Dogs Trust, one of the biggest canine charities in the U.K.[66]

The work of these welfare organisations highlighted the plight of animals who had served in the war, contributing greatly to their "veteranisation" in British society.[67] Medals and ribbons were issued to notable animals who had survived, and in some cases horse trough memorials were erected alongside the conventional village war memorials that sprung up in villages and towns across Britain. In St Jude's Church, Barnet, London, the sculptor Charles Lutyens (1829-1915) (father of Edwin Lutyens (1869-1944)) donated a bronze horse sculpture which was unveiled in 1926 alongside a plaque commemorating the horses of the First World War, reflecting the increasing recognition of the animal contribution. In other nations, the memorialisation of animals in the post-war period was less popular, though examples do exist such as the *Monument aux pigeons voyageurs* (Monument to carrier pigeons) in Lille, France. The monument sits outside the entrance to Lille Zoo and was erected by the French Federation of Pigeon Fanciers in 1936 "to the 20,000 pigeons who died for their country".

Another contributing factor to the veteranisation of animals was the publication of books such as Peter Shaw Baker's*Animal War Heroes*, which used individual stories as a way of commemorating the wider contribution of animals to the war effort.[68] The increased recognition of animals in conflict during the Second World War led to the creation of the Dickin Medal by the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) in 1943, to be awarded to animals for acts of gallantry. The Dickin Medal was posthumously awarded to Jack Seeley's horse, Warrior, in 2014, reflective of the fact that it is individual stories that have largely shaped how animals in war have been remembered in the latter decades of the 20th and 21st century. However, the authenticity of many of these stories is difficult to prove, and over the decades facts have been blended with fictionalised accounts.[69] The stories and changing views around animal welfare have created a narrative driven by sentimentalisation, often regarding the animals as victims who "had no choice" in war.[70] This is part of what Samuel Hynes contends is the "myth of the war", presenting a version of the animal war that does not necessarily reflect events as they occurred, but is instead heavily influenced by emotional response.[71]

Today, the British public are asked to actively remember animals in war alongside humans, with the unveiling of the Animals in War memorial at Hyde Park, London, in 2004 and the creation of the purple poppy in 2007 as the animal counterpart to the red poppy – the national symbol of remembrance in Britain.[72] During the centenary the increased emphasis on commemorating animals in war was highlighted by numerous publications, television programmes and art installations/memorials focusing specifically on the animal contribution across Europe.

Conclusion

Many different types of animals were involved in the First World War, but the main contribution was made by equines, dogs, and pigeons. These animals were used in an official capacity by nearly all major belligerents and were in many cases essential for communication and transportation. Different breeds and species proved effective across different fronts, with military authorities utilising the natural attributes of animals to improve the efficiency of operations. As well as their practical contributions, animals as pets and mascots greatly influenced the morale of troops, providing companionship and helping to strengthen esprit de corps.

Although the role of animals in the war is often described as forgotten, the memorialisation and commemoration of their contribution is not a modern phenomenon. Its sentimental tone was largely defined by animal welfare charities both during and immediately after the war, as they sought to raise money to support wounded animals. Today, the narrative of the animal-victim prevails in the wider cultural memory of the war, and there is a great deal of scope for further engagement to better understand the role animals played.

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