



Image - PDSA

Cranwell Aviation Heritage Museum

# Animals in War

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# Animals in War

Humans have utilised the services of animals throughout history, in times of peace and also war.

‘Animals in War’ takes a brief look at some of the roles animals have played in conflict from WW1 to the current day. ‘Animals in War’ also tells the stories of some animals who have been awarded the Dickin Medal, the animals’ Victoria Cross.



CAHM would like to thank the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA) for providing information and images of the awardees of the Dickin Medal that feature in 'Animals in War'.

**D**uring WWII many pilots in the RAF looked after animals such as the Labrador owned by Guy Gibson that was buried on RAF Scampton and Antis the Alsatian who was awarded the Dickin Medal on 28 January 1949 and was owned by a Czech Václav Robert Bozdech. Antis and Robert served together in the French Air Force and the RAF from 1940 to 1945, in North Africa and England where Antis was the mascot of 311 Squadron. When the pair returned to Czechoslovakia after the war, Antis subsequently helped his master's escape across the frontier when he had to escape the Communists.

In conflicts, the military have enlisted millions of animals to serve and often die alongside their armies. These animals were chosen for their natural instincts and vast numbers were killed. Eight million horses and countless mules and donkeys died in WWI. They were used to transport ammunition and supplies to the front. Mules were also found to have tremendous stamina in extreme climates and difficult terrain, serving in the freezing mud of the Western Front and in the heat of Burma, Eritrea and Tunisia during WWII.

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*A dog's qualities of intelligence and devotion has been and still is valued and used by the British forces.*

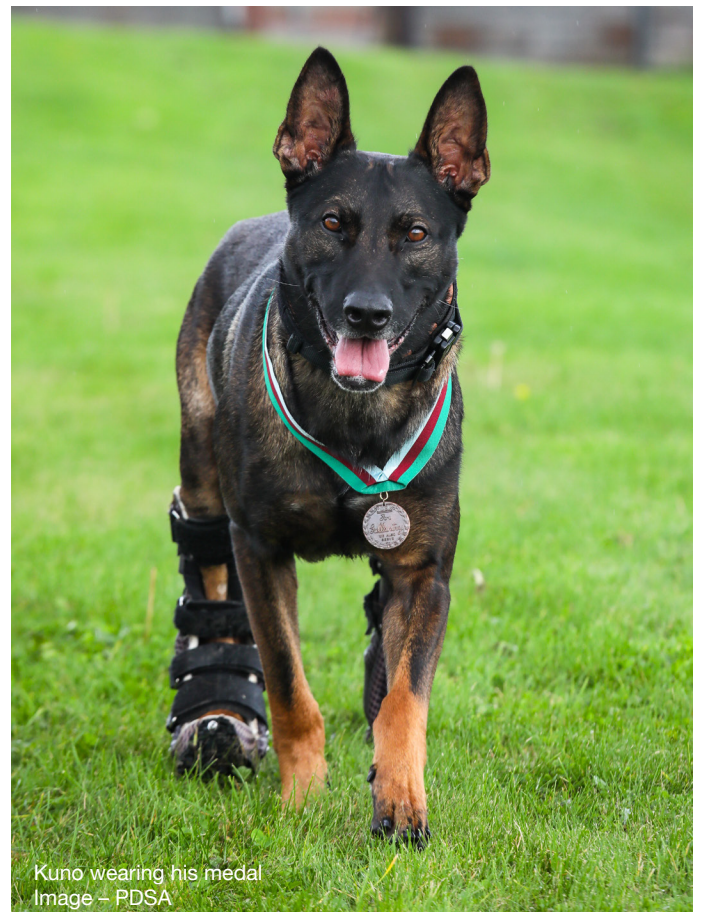
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A dog's qualities of intelligence and devotion has been and still is valued and used by the British forces. Among their many duties, these faithful animals have been used to: run messages, lay telegraph wires, detect mines, dig out bomb victims and act as guard or patrol dogs. Many battled on despite horrific wounds, showing indomitable courage and supreme loyalty to their handlers.

More than 100,000 pigeons served Britain in WWI and 200,000 in WWII. They performed heroically and saved thousands of lives by carrying vital messages, sometimes over long distances. Flying at the rate of a mile a minute from the front line, or from behind enemy lines or ships and airplanes, these gallant birds would

struggle on through all weathers, even when wounded and exhausted, they carried their vital messages home.

Unusually elephants, camels, oxen, bullocks, cats, canaries and even glow worms were used in times of war and conflict during the 20th Century. In WWII elephants worked alone or in teams to carry heavy guns and ammunition in the Far East where motorised transport was not an option. At the other end of the spectrum the soldiers of WWI used glow worms to read messages and maps in the dark trenches and tunnels because lanterns would highlight their position to the enemy.



Kuno wearing his medal  
Image - PDSA



Horse – Animal Memorial  
Image © WMR-53495

There are many fitting and lasting tributes to animals who have served. The Animal Memorial, Park Lane, London sculpted by David Backhouse and unveiled on 24 November 2004 is deservedly impressive.

It comprises a large curved Portland stone wall with animals engraved in profile. The wall is surrounded by statues of a bronze horse, two mules carrying equipment and a dog.

On the larger portion of broken wall an elephant, camels, goats, pigeons, glow worms and other animals are carved in Bas-relief.

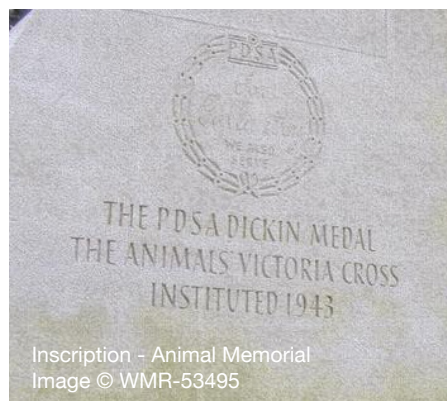
On back of wall is engraved outline of animals, representing ghostly silhouette of those killed. A poignant inscription found on the memorial reads 'This monument is dedicated to all the animals that served and died alongside British and Allied Forces in wars and campaigns of the 20th Century, they had no choice'.



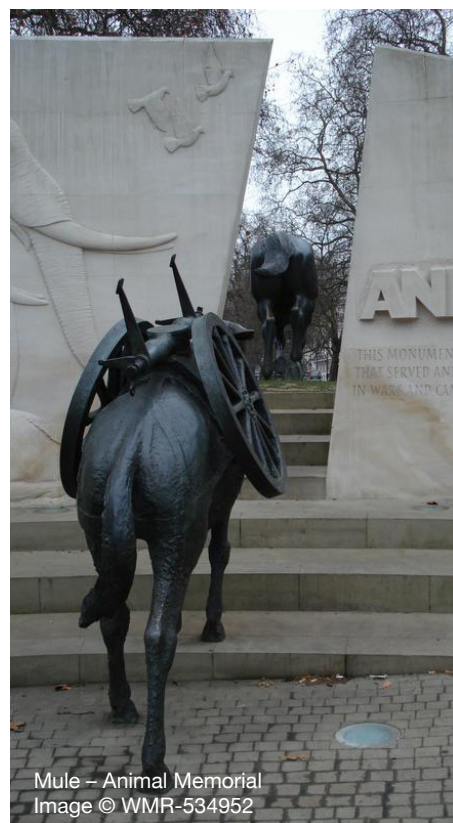
Bas-relief – Animal Memorial  
Image © WMR-534952



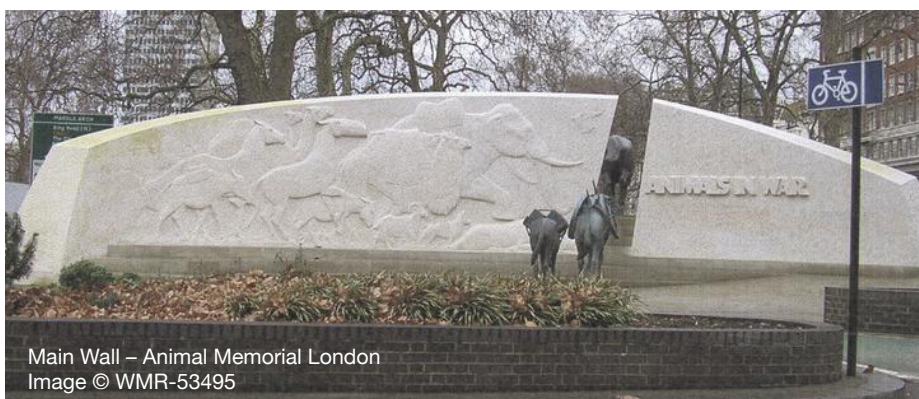
Mule – Animal Memorial  
Image © WMR-534952



Inscription - Animal Memorial  
Image © WMR-53495

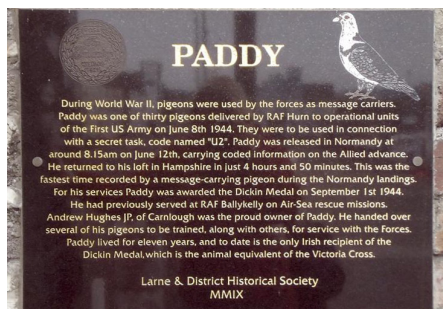


Mule – Animal Memorial  
Image © WMR-534952



Main Wall – Animal Memorial London  
Image © WMR-53495

Other memorials dedicated to specific groups of animals can be found throughout the country. For instance a WWII Pigeon memorial plaque found in Carnlough, County Antrim, Northern Ireland remembers Paddy who was one of thirty pigeons delivered by RAF Hurn to operational units of the 1st US Army on 8 June 1944. He was released in Normandy at



Pigeon Memorial - Paddy  
Image © WMR-69527

around 8.15am on 12 June, carrying coded information on the Allied advance.

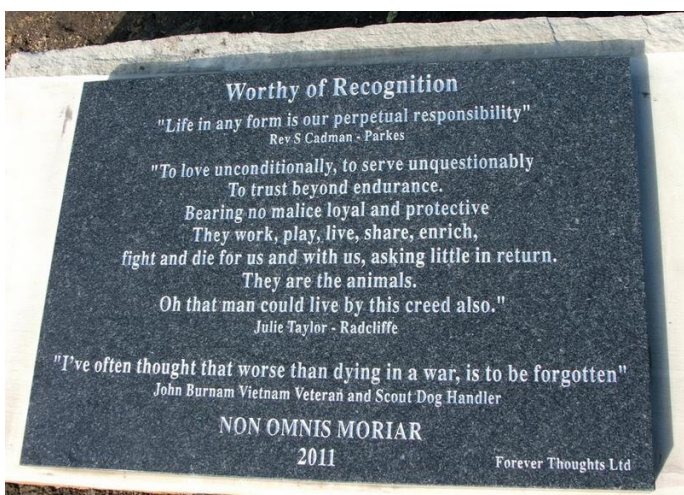
Paddy returned to his loft in Hampshire just 4 hours and 50 mins later. This was the fastest time recorded by a message-carrying Pigeon during the Normandy landings. For his services Paddy was awarded the Dickin Medal on 1 September 1944. Paddy lived for eleven years, and to date is the only Irish recipient of the Dickin Medal.



Leeds Animal Memorial  
Image © WMR-61593

Others like the London memorial remember multiple animals. A stone memorial found in Morley, Leeds commemorates animals involved in WWI, WWII and other 20th century conflicts. It was sculpted by Melanie Wilks and unveiled on the 14 April 2011.

The remembrance stone is sculpted with reliefs of a horse, dog, cat and birds and set in a circular garden. Inscriptions found on the memorial reflect the importance of animals in our lives. One tablet reads 'worthy of Recognition "Life in any form is our perpetual responsibility" Rev S Cadman-Parkes "To love unconditionally, to serve unquestionably, to trust beyond endurance. Bearing no malice loyal and protective they work, play, live, share, enrich, fight and die for us and with us, asking little in return. They are the animals. Oh that man could live by this creed also." Julie Taylor-Radcliffe "I've often thought that worse than dying in a war, is to be forgotten" John Burnam Vietnam Veteran and Scout Dog Handler NON OMNIS MORIAR 2011'.



Inscription on Leeds Memorial  
Image © WMR-61593



Suffolk Horse Memorial  
Image © WMR-70501

The animals that served with the military that most people are aware of are Horses and a memorial in Woodbridge Suffolk remembers the dedication and courage of the Horses from Suffolk who were faithful unto death whilst serving in WWI.



Bear Memorial - Wojtek  
Image - © WMR-69527

Wojtek the 'Soldier Bear'  
Image - Wikimedia Commons

An unusual WWII memorial of a life-size sculpted brown Bear which can be found in Duns, Berwickshire was gifted by the people of the town of Zaglan, Poland. Wojtek the 'Soldier Bear' was the mascot of the 22nd Transport Artillery Supply Company, Polish II Corps. The Syrian brown bear was adopted as a cub by Polish troops. Wojtek, meaning 'little one', weighed around 18 stone (250lb/113kg) and grew to over six feet tall and was extremely tame and comfortable in human company.

In 1943, the unit was posted to Italy and Wojtek enlisted and was given the rank of Private so that he could accompany them. During the fierce fighting for Monte Cassino, Wojtek helped with the vital task of keeping front-line troops supplied by carrying heavy shells and boxes of ammunition. The image of Wojtek carrying shells was later incorporated into the Company's insignia. After the war, Wojtek travelled with the unit to Scotland, where he eventually found a home at Edinburgh Zoo until his death in 1963.

# PDSA - Dickin Medal



The loyalty and courage of these animals has also been recognized since 1943 by the PDSA. When its founder Maria Dickin CBE instituted the Dickin Medal, the highest award any animal can receive whilst serving in military conflict, and is recognized worldwide as the animals' Victoria Cross. The medal 'acknowledges outstanding acts of bravery or devotion to duty displayed by animals serving with the Armed Forces or Civil Defence units in any theatre of war throughout the world'.

The Dickin Medal is a large, bronze medallion bearing the words "For Gallantry" and "We Also Serve" all within a laurel wreath. The ribbon is striped green, dark brown and sky blue representing water, earth and air to symbolise the naval, land and air forces.

# Dicken Medal (DM) Recipients

## Warrior – DM (Hon)

*“For Gallantry. Honouring all animals that served in WW1 1914-18.”*



**K**nown to many as ‘The Horse the Germans couldn’t kill’, Warrior’s story is one of the most remarkable tales of animal bravery and endurance to emerge from WWI.

General Jack Seely from the Isle of Wight left the island in 1914 to take command of the Canadian Cavalry Corps. His horse Warrior, a thoroughbred stallion, travelled to the Western Front with him. For four years, Warrior witnessed the full horror of war from the first day of the Battle of the Somme to the muddy hell of Passchendaele.

Warrior was trapped in burning stables twice, buried in rubble and mud, and regularly subjected to intensive attack from machine guns and mortar shells but he survived. In March

1918, Warrior led a cavalry charge against the Germans at Amiens a turning point in WWI.

Finally, Warrior and General Seely returned home to the life they had known before the outbreak of war and when Warrior died in 1941 at the age of 32, The Times ran an obituary for him with the by line: ‘The Horse the Germans couldn’t kill’.

Warrior was awarded the Honorary PDSA Dicken Medal in 2014 to mark 100 years since the start of the WWI. The only recipient to pre-date the Medal’s institution in 1943, he received the Medal on behalf of all animals that served in WWI.

Warrior’s unique Medal was accepted on his behalf by Brough Scott, Jack Seely’s grandson.

## Beauty - DM8

*“For being the pioneer dog in locating buried air-raided victims while serving with a PDSA Rescue Squad.”*



Beauty in the rubble  
Image – PDSA

Beauty with Bill Barnett  
Image – PDSA

**B**eauty was a Wirehaired Terrier owned by PDSA Superintendent Bill Barnett and thought to be one of the world's first 'Rescue Dogs'.

Born in 1939, Beauty would often accompany Bill as he took part in rescue missions at the height of the London Blitz in 1940s. During one mission she began independently digging through the rubble of a bombsite, within a few minutes, the cries of a cat were heard. The rescue team quickly joined in the search and managed to pull a trapped cat from the rubble.

Beauty's talent was recognised and she became

a member of the team and took part in multiple search and rescue operations as the Blitz progressed.

Beauty was responsible for locating and saving the lives of 63 animals during her service and ended up receiving multiple awards for her bravery and dedication to duty. She was first awarded the PDSA Pioneer Medal, an award historically given exclusively to people. Beauty received her PDSA Dickin Medal in 1945.

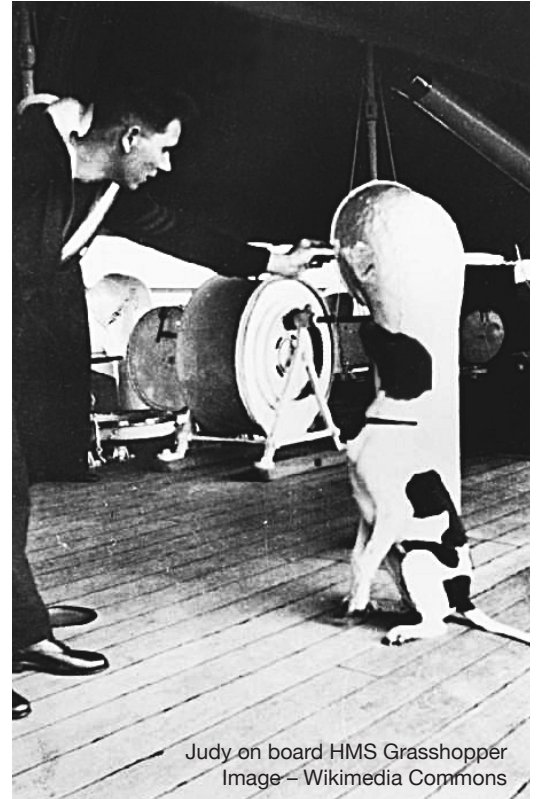
Beauty died in 1950 and is buried alongside other PDSA Dickin Medal recipients at the PDSA's Animal Cemetery in Ilford, Essex.

## Judy - DM37

*“For magnificent courage and endurance in Japanese prison camps, which helped to maintain morale among her fellow prisoners and also for saving many lives through her intelligence and watchfulness.”*



Judy receiving her PDSA Dickin Medal in 1946  
Image – PDSA



Judy on board HMS Grasshopper  
Image – Wikimedia Commons

**A**n English Pointer, Judy was the mascot on board HMS Grasshopper during the evacuation from Singapore in 1942. When the ship was attacked and sunk by enemy planes, she and her fellow crew members swam to safety on a nearby island. After two days without food or water, the crew were becoming desperate, but Judy began digging in the sand and unearthed a fresh water spring, ensuring their survival.

After being taken prisoner, years of starvation and repeated ill treatment in Japanese POW camps followed for Judy and her crewmates. Most prisoners were subjected to repeated beatings and this was no different for Judy who was attacked with rifle butts whenever she tried to defend her shipmates. During her incarceration in the Medan camp, Leading Aircraftman Frank Williams shared his rations with Judy and the pair became inseparable.

In June 1944, the POWs and Judy who'd been smuggled on board in a sack, embarked on SS

Van Warwyck bound for Singapore. Disaster struck the ship when it was sunk following an air strike, only 200 hundred out of an estimated 700 prisoners survived, including Judy who saved the lives of those who couldn't swim by pushing driftwood towards them. Rescued by a nearby Japanese tanker, the Japanese soldiers intended to kill Judy as soon as they reached land. However, once land was reached, the former commander of the Medan camp, declared Judy an official Prisoner of War – POW 81A – and saved her life. She was WWII's only official canine POW.

Reunited with Frank, Judy survived until the Japanese surrender in 1945, despite several camp moves, gunshot wounds, alligator bites and attacks from wild dogs. On her return to Britain she captured the public's imagination and was awarded her PDSA Dickin Medal in May 1946.

Judy remained with Frank until her death in Tanzania in February 1960.

## Simon - DM54

*“Served on HMS Amethyst during the Yangtse Incident, disposing of many rats though wounded by shell blast. Throughout the incident his behaviour was of the highest order, although the blast was capable of making a hole over a foot in diameter in a steel plate.”*



Simon - ship's cat aboard HMS Amethyst  
Image - PDSA

In the summer of 1949, at the height of the Chinese Civil War, HMS Amethyst came under artillery fire while cruising along the Yangtze River. The ship's Captain, Lieutenant Commander Skinner, died and many others were injured, including the ship's cat, Simon.

HMS Amethyst received numerous direct hits and despite the efforts of a passing Navy Frigate to pull the ship to safety, HMS Amethyst remained stranded in mid-river for almost 10 weeks. Hot, humid conditions were the perfect breeding ground for a rats, and the already limited food supplies were in danger of being completely destroyed. Despite shrapnel wounds to his legs and burns to his back and face, Simon was all that stood between the rats and the crew's food supplies.

The rats were big and fierce, and had even attacked crew members, but this didn't stop Simon from hunting them down. One particularly vicious rat, nicknamed Mao Tse-tung, carried out repeated attacks on the meagre food supplies. When Simon killed it, the crew were so impressed they promoted Simon to 'Able Seaman' in recognition of his achievement.

As the weeks went by, Simon continued protecting supplies and lifted the morale of his shipmates' when he accompanied the Maintenance Officer on his daily rounds. Simon later received the Amethyst campaign ribbon for 'distinguished and meritorious service... single-handedly and unarmed stalk down and destroy 'Moa Tse-tung' a rat guilty of raiding food supplies which were critically short. Be it further known that from April 22 to August 4, you did rid HMS Amethyst of pestilence and vermin, with unrelenting faithfulness'.

Simon received his PDSA Dickin Medal posthumously in 1949 and was buried with full military honours in PDSA's Animal Cemetery in Ilford, Essex.



Simon  
Image - PDSA

## Mali - DM69

*“For tireless bravery and devotion to duty during an operation in Afghanistan with the British Military in 2012.”*



**A**n eight-year-old Belgian Malinois Mali worked with a British Military unit deployed to Afghanistan in 2012. Mali assisted in an operation to secure an enemy stronghold, situated in a multi-storey building. His role was to detect explosives and insurgents, alerting his colleagues to their presence. During the seven-and-a-half-hour mission, an intense firefight took place.

Mali was hoisted up the outside of the building several times to provide the force with a foothold. He went above and beyond the call of duty, indicating the presence of insurgents numerous times, as well as moving through direct fire on two separate occasions while searching for explosives.

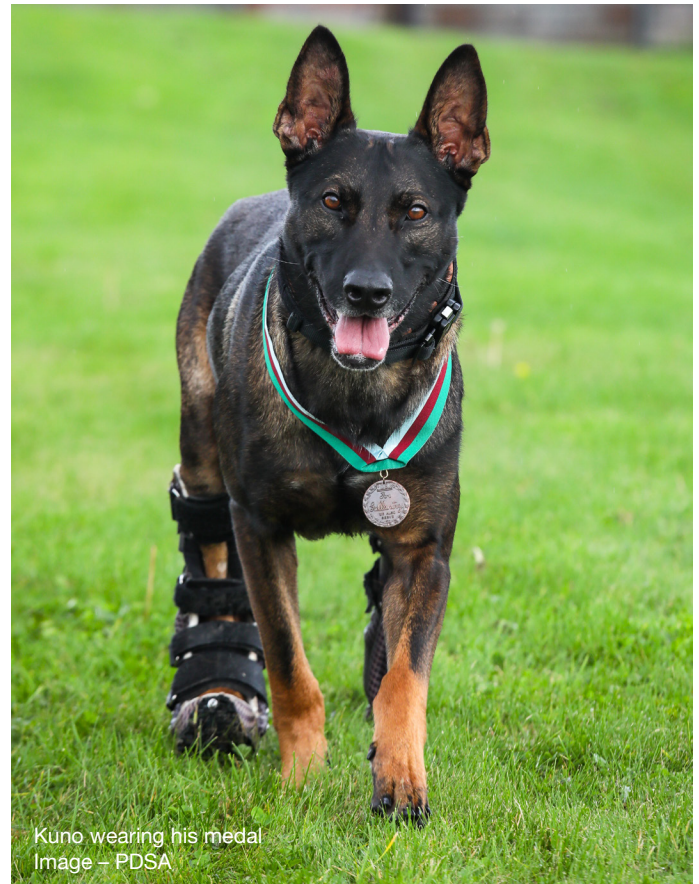
The unit sustained casualties during the operation. Mali was also seriously injured by three grenade blasts. The first two explosions caused injuries to his chest, front and rear legs. The final grenade exploded close to his face,

knocking out a tooth and damaging his ear. Despite his injuries, Mali continued his duties and pushed forward, remaining close to his handler throughout.

Mali went on to make a full recovery. His gallantry and devotion to duty earned him a PDSA Dickin Medal – which uniquely bears a commemorative ‘Centenary bar’ to mark the 100th anniversary of PDSA. Mali received his award in London on 17 November 2017.

His handler for the mission, referred to Mali as the unit’s ‘Guardian Angel’ who didn’t just do a job, but lifted everyone’s morale, day in, day out. Speaking about Mali’s Medal, he said, ‘I feel very proud and humbled that Mali is receiving the PDSA Dickin Medal. You can have all the satellites, all the radios on your back, but at the end of the day the one thing that gives guys the confidence to go out and fight is Man’s best friend - the Military Working Dog’.

## Kuno - DM72



**D**uring a 2019 operation, four-year-old Belgian Shepherd Malinois, Kuno, and his handler were deployed in support of specialist forces on a compound raid against a well-armed and aggressive enemy when they came under attack. Pinned down by grenade and machine-gun fire from an insurgent, the assault force was unable to move without taking casualties. Without hesitation, Kuno charged through a hail of gunfire to tackle the gunman, breaking the deadlock and changing the course of the attack, allowing the mission to be completed successfully.

During the assault Kuno unfortunately, was shot and received bullet wounds to both hind legs. Undeterred, and barely breaking stride, Kuno launched himself at the insurgent, biting his arm and wrestling him to the ground. The insurgent was quickly incapacitated, but despite his wounds, Kuno continued to attack to maintain the advantage. His actions had altered the course of the battle; the assault force swiftly

entered the courtyard, neutralised the insurgent and cleared the remainder of the building. Only then did Kuno relent. He was given life-saving treatment by his handler and by medics in the back of a helicopter. Kuno's injuries were so severe he required several operations before he was stable enough to fly back to the UK. His loyalty, upbeat character and courage were ever-present through a prolonged period of rehabilitation.

Sadly, part of one of Kuno's rear paws had to be amputated to prevent life-threatening infection. But now he is thriving in retirement after becoming the first UK Military Working Dog to be fitted with custom-made prosthetic limbs. Despite his injuries, Kuno has recovered well and is in good spirits and health.

Kuno became the 72nd recipient; recipients include 35 dogs, 32 World War II messenger pigeons, four horses and one cat.

# Injured Animals

It is frightening to look at the staggering number of injured animals in WWI alone. 2.5 million injured animals were admitted to the Army Veterinary Corps during WWI, but happily over 85 per cent were treated and returned to duty.



Royal Army Veterinary Corps Memorial  
Image – Crown Copyright OGL - 2 May 2014



Horse being led to a motor ambulance at No. 10 Veterinary Hospital at Neufchâtel; near Etaples, 2nd March 1916  
Image – Wikimedia Commons – Public Domain

Between August 1914 and December 1917 more than 1,850,000 horses and mules were treated in veterinary hospitals and 80 per cent treated were returned fit for duty. It was horses that were used by Cavalry regiments, to pull the guns, to bring up supplies and to pull the ambulances for injured soldiers. But not just horses were vital to the army, many other animals like pigeons and dogs also served. However, it is estimated that 484,143 British horses, mules, camels and bullocks died between 1914 and 1918. And many hundreds of dogs, carrier pigeons and other animals also died on various fronts.

But fortunately animal welfare was still observed during WWI. Temporary kennels were established at Boulogne, France for dogs belonging to men going on leave to provide quarantine restrictions for animals' to return to the UK.

When WWI ended, the Soldiers Dog Fund was set up to meet the cost of

bringing the dogs over and keeping them in quarantine until the demobilised men were able to take them home. Five hundred kennels were specially built at Hackbridge, Surrey, to house the dogs.

Throughout history animals have served with diligence, fearlessness, relentlessness and resoluteness alongside their human handlers. Proving that the human race is truly honored to have such loyalty and comradeship alongside them in times of extreme danger.



Horse sick lines and Army Veterinary Corps soldier, photo taken by Captain Bruce  
Image – ww1photos.org



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