

# PURPLE POPPY MEMORIAL

## Uphall

23rd August 2021

Ancre Somme Association Scotland Charity

Supported by Uphall Community Council





above: **Horses wearing gas masks on the Western Front**  
German transport driver and horses wearing gas masks  
on the Western Front, 1917.

below: **Lining up for inspection**

French Red Cross dogs line up for inspection on the Western Front, 1914. These specially trained dogs wore harnesses containing medical equipment, which they delivered to injured soldiers on the battlefield.





**I** am honoured to unveil this Purple Poppy Memorial on behalf of the Ancre Somme Association Scotland Charity.

This wonderful memorial is dedicated to the Animals that have served the Nation, past, present and future.

We should all take a moment to reflect, where would we be today, if wasn't for the sacrifice of Millions of Animals.

The memorial in Uphall, West Lothian, leaves a legacy and is a permanent reminder to us all".



### **Her Majesty's Lord Lieutenant Ms Moira Niven MBE**

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**T**he Purple Poppy Day is the 23rd August. The purple poppy is a symbol of remembrance in the United Kingdom for animals that served during wartime.

Over 16 million animals served in the First World War. They were used for transport, communication and companionship.

In 1914, both sides had large cavalry forces. Horse and camel-mounted troops were used in the desert campaigns throughout the war, but on the Western Front, new weapons like the machine gun made cavalry charges increasingly difficult.

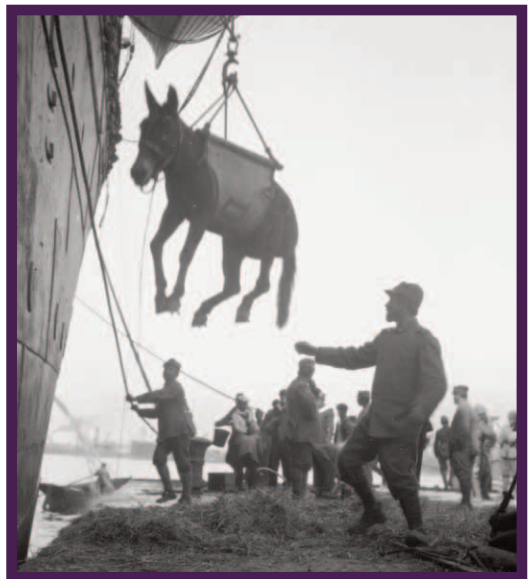
However, animals remained a crucial part of the war effort. Horses, donkeys, mules and camels carried food, water, ammunition and medical supplies to men at the front, and dogs and pigeons carried messages. Canaries were used to detect poisonous gas, and cats and dogs were trained to hunt rats in the trenches.



Animals were not only used for work. Dogs, cats, and more unusual animals including monkeys, bears and lions, were kept as pets and mascots to raise morale and provide comfort amidst the hardships of war.

1. 20,000 dogs serving Britain and her allies in WW1. Messenger dogs, mercy dogs, guard dogs and mascots did their bit for King and Country. Stubby even warned of impending gas attacks. Dogs were the first domesticated animal and have been used in battle throughout history. The Roman Army had whole companies of dogs wearing spiked collars around their neck and ankles.
2. Pigeons have been used as message carriers for over 5,000 years. Their vital messages saved the lives of thousands in WWI and WW2. Cher Ami was given the Croix de Guerre for her heroic message delivery that saved many soldiers' lives, despite being shot at and terribly injured.
3. Humans began to domesticate horses in Central Asia around 4000 BC and they've been used in warfare for most of recorded history. They are prey animals and so their first reaction to threat is to startle and flee. Despite this, against their natural instincts, they've raced into countless battles, carrying their riders. Over eight million died in WW1.
4. From Simpson and his donkey at Gallipoli to Jimmy 'The Sergeant', born at The Battle of the Somme, donkeys have saved soldiers' lives and given their own. More suited to green fields than battlefields, donkeys have been to War for as long as horses have.
5. An estimated 500,000 cats served in World War I. In the trenches of the Western front there were serious problems with rats. WWI cats also detected gas.

No animal chooses to go to war but their selfless acts of unconscious heroism show us how to be true heroes.



**Landing mules at Salonika**  
Italians landing mules at Salonika in October, 1916.

It is recognised worldwide as the animals' Victoria Cross. Instituted in 1943 by PDSA's founder Maria Dickin CBE, it 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 PDSA 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.

During the Second World War (1939-45), PDSA's founder Maria Dickin CBE was aware of the incredible bravery displayed by animals on active service and the Home Front. Inspired by the animals' devotion to man and duty, she introduced a special medal specifically for animals in war.

The Medal has been awarded 71 times since 1943 plus 1 Honorary PDSA Dickin Medal which was awarded in 2014. The recipients comprise 34 dogs, 32 pigeons, 4 horses and 1 cat.



*The PDSA Dickin Medal is the highest award any animal can receive whilst serving in military conflict.*

### **Laying telephone wires**

A German war dog, fitted with apparatus for laying telephone wires, walking across muddy ground, 1917.



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The front page picture shows a dog-handler reading a message brought by a messenger dog, who had just swum across a canal in France, during World War I.



© Imperial War Museum

#### **Naval Mascot**

Togo was the cat mascot of the battleship HMS Dreadnought.





**Carrier pigeons during a gas drill**

German soldiers wearing respirators as they place carrier pigeons into a gas-proof chamber, presumably during an anti-gas drill.



The British, Commonwealth and Allied forces enlisted many millions of animals to serve and often die alongside their armies. These animals were chosen for a variety of their natural instincts and vast numbers were killed, often suffering agonising deaths from wounds, starvation, thirst, exhaustion, disease and exposure.

Thanks to  
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Twitter: @PurplePoppyUK1

