

Animals during WWI



Men of Oundle Leaving for War. From Peterborough Museum (CG127)

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Animals during WW1

"My name is Jimmy and I will be guiding you through the theme of Animals WW1:

My life was shrouded in mystery! I was a local celebrity in Peterborough during the First World War. Stories go that in June of 1916 I was born during one of the most fierce battles of the war, my mother's duty was to carry supplies from the rear to the front line and she was fatally injured by German shellfire. I was delivered by soldiers of the 1st Scottish (Cameroonian) Rifles Regiment, during The Battle of the Somme. They gave me the name Jimmy, I even greeted soldiers by raising my front leg in salute, apparently, and I was taught to beg for jam biscuits on my hind legs. Like my mother I was wounded, seven times overall, and I was awarded a brow band embellished with chevrons and stripes. In 1919 I was bought through public subscription by Mrs Heath, of the Peterborough RSPCA. In my retirement I was taken out on flag days to raise money, and even pulled a wooden carriage along with little passengers in the back! I died aged 26 and I'm buried in Central Park.

There were many roles taken on by animals during the war, some of them might surprise you!



Jimmy the Donkey, From June and Vernon Bull

Related Themes:

Animal's and War, Animal Welfare,
Working with Animals.

SOURCES:

Using the sources provided on the following pages you can conduct your own research on the theme of Animals during WW1.

For some questions you may want to look at the website: www.peterboroughww1.co.uk



Animals during WW1

SOURCES:

The sources on this page relate to the role of horses during wartime, they include:

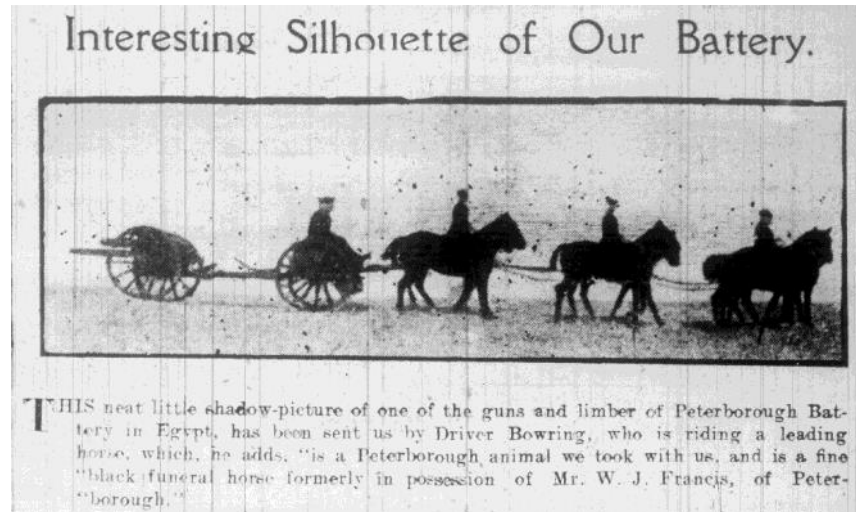
1. An Article
2. Frank William's entry in the visitors' book

QUESTIONS:

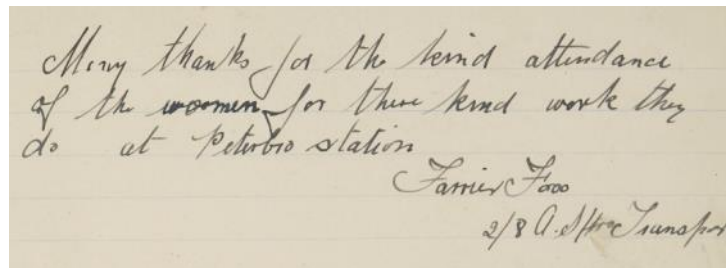
- In the entry the serviceman signs 'Farrier Fox', what is a farrier?
- How would the daily life and routine of a funeral horse change during wartime?
- What impact do you think war had on the animals?

WEBSITE TASK:

- Use the search option, use the 'Filter Results' sidebar and select 'Regiments', select the Royal Horse Artillery and then 'Update Results'. Read the biographies and entries.
- How would a horse have helped Gunner Mayes do his job? (Look at the sources on this page for a clue!)
- What did a saddler do?



From Peterborough Advertiser, 24/2/1917



WUTAC visitors' book, From Peterborough Archives & Local Studies (PAS/WUTAC/1/1/1, Page 17)

Many thanks for the kind attendance of the women for there kind work they do at Peterbro station
Farrier Fox
2/8 A.S Hrs Transport

Transcription of the extract

Animals during WW1

SOURCES:

The source on this page relates to the role of dogs during wartime, it includes:

1. An Article

QUESTIONS:

- What did Bruno and the boy do for the servicemen?
- What do you think Bruno's 'good services' were?
- Why would they pick this dog for the job?

WEBSITE TASK:

- Go to the Further Links & Information section, and visit the Imperial War Museum page 'Animals that went to war'.
- What other role was carried out by dogs in WW1?



From Peterborough Advertiser, 17/11/1917

Animals during WW1

SOURCES:

The sources on this page relates to Jimmy the Donkey, they include:

1. A Photograph
2. A Photograph
3. A Photograph (With Transcription)

QUESTIONS:

- Where was Jimmy born?
- What is the Somme well known for during The First World War?
- Which regiment had Jimmy as their mascot?

WEBSITE TASK:

- Go to the 'Discover More' section of the website and read the article about Jimmy.
- What did Mr George Walding say about Jimmy in 1979?
- If the story isn't true, why do you think someone would have made it up?



Jimmy the Donkey, From June and Vernon Bull



Jimmy the Donkey, From June and Vernon Bull



Jimmy's Gravestone, Central Park, Peterborough, From June and Vernon Bull

Our Jimmy
Born On The Somme June 1916
Mascot of the 1st Scottish Rifles
Died 10 May 1943
Bought by Mrs Heath in 1920
To give him a good home
And to promote interest in the
RSPCA

Transcription of the Grave

Animals during WW1

SOURCES:

The sources on this page relates to the role of Mules in wartime, they include:

1. A Photograph
2. Text from a letter by Francis Lang

QUESTIONS:

- What would a 'Driver' do in the Royal Field Artillery?
- Why was Francis given the mules?
- What were the mules called and what happened to them?



Portrait of Francis Lang, From
Toby Wood

"I was given a pair of horses and joined a 'Flying Battery', one of those which moved to various parts of the front where extra guns were needed. Sadly, my horses were both killed before very long, during a very wild battle near Ypres.

I was given a pair of mules. As you know a mule is an animal which has an ass (a gentleman donkey) for its father and a mare (a lady horse) for its mother. They are very bad tempered but they love to work hard.

Our mules came from South America; they would normally be taught to behave themselves before they were shipped abroad but we were losing horses so fast that we could not wait and they were fairly wild when they arrived. One of mine was brown; she had deep frowns across her forehead and lumps of loose skin hanging about all over her; she could kick forwards, backwards and sideways; she could stand on one leg and kick with the other three. When I gave her her first feed she swallowed a mouthful of corn and then blew it out through her nose into my face and then grumbled because she was hungry. She was a REALLY BAD GIRL. I christened her MYRTLE.

My other mule was just the opposite; she was black and silky; she would never kick me without giving a little snort first to warn me; she was a NICE GIRL. I expect you have known both sorts at school. I christened her BETTY.

Myrtle and Betty and I stayed together for nearly a year. We moved to various parts of France and Belgium. We were in the battle of CAMBRAI when the tanks were used for the first time. Cambrai was held by the Germans; it was important because it was the junction for 4 railway lines. We pushed the Germans back and then they pushed us back. Myrtle and Betty and I thought it was a silly business and rather nasty and the ground all turned to deep mud. Eventually I was given 14 days leave; during that time the Germans made their last big push of the war and when I got back to France, all my friends including M and B had been captured by the Germans. I am sure they were sorry they had Myrtle".

*An extract taken from a letter written by Driver Francis Lang who joined the Royal Field Artillery, on 16 February, aged 19.
From Toby Wood (Francis Lang's grandson)*