

## Animal Assistance in WWI

Animals. They come in so many different shapes and sizes, all intriguing, all with their own sciences. For some people, animals are their whole life, in more ways than one. Others detest animals with all of their being. However, we can all agree that we need animals in our lives. Animals, apart from being food (in some cases) can reduce stress levels, help disabled people get around easily and just be good company. Animals, in fact helped in World War One: without them, we may not have won the battle, and the world would be a very different place today.

Let's start with a bird. But not just any bird. A bird called Cher Ami - that's French for 'Dear Friend'. And what a dear friend he was! He saved the lives of almost 200 men, and the event of being shot in the chest, having his leg ripped off with a bullet and being blinded in one eye didn't stop him from completing his mission.

During the First World War, around 550 soldiers were trapped in a ditch in a hill, and their own ranks were obviously firing at them. As a last resort, a message was strapped to Cher Ami's leg, and he bravely flew back to base, and handed over the message, which is famous for saying: "We are along the road parallel to 276.4. Our own artillery is dropping a barrage directly on us. For heaven's sake, stop it."

Unfortunately, on his way there, he was attacked with guns, yet despite this, he bravely continued all the way back to base, and handed over the message. He was saved by army doctors, though they could not restore his leg or eye, and he managed to survive. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre, one of the highest military awards, for his bravery and resistance. Carrier pigeons were seen as risky but reliable means of communication until after Cher Ami's brave feat: they were recognised for their remarkable determination.



When you hear the word indestructible, you think that there has to be some way that thing can get destroyed. Well, indestructible is the perfect word to describe Warrior, and war horse during the First World War. He really lived up to his nickname: "the horse the Germans could not kill."

Warrior was the horse of General Jack Seely, and they went to war together in 1914 on the Western front. It seemed miraculous how Warrior would survive every disaster possible, while his fellow horses and mules died in the struggle. Battle after battle, he left unscathed, and after the war, he went back to live on his home turf, the Isle of Wight until he died at a whopping 33 years! What a Warrior!

It is well-known that dogs are man's best friend. They are loyal, lovable and loving. They make it their mission to defend their owners. One dog made an unforgettable difference, and he started out as a stray living off the streets: Sergeant Stubby.

Stubby got his name from his short stump of a tail, but that meant nothing compared to his heroic deeds. He befriended a young soldier from the United States called Robert Conroy, just before they were to be shipped to France to help fight. Conroy



smuggled Stubby aboard – a wise decision in the long-term, but certainly not at that very time.



Stubby is well known for being the “unofficial mascot of the 1-102<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment” and was only accepted into the army because of his intelligence: when he was first discovered, he saluted just like he had been trained, and the commander allowed him to remain with the troops. As soon as the chance came, Stubby immediately leapt into action. He is most famous for detecting mustard gas in the early stages in order for the men to have enough time to put on their gas masks. He also rooted out a German spy, and locked onto him by his trousers until the US troops arrived.

Stubby lifted the soldiers' spirits, and was a great comfort to the wounded, even when he was injured himself. Due to all of his efforts, he well-known for being the most decorated dog of the Great War, as well as the only dog to be promoted to sergeant via combat. He served in 17 battles for 18 months, on the Western Front, and was regarded as a celebrity upon his return to the US.

As you can see, animals played a vital role in the first world war. An unnumerable number of families owe their existence to Cher Ami; we can all learn a valuable lesson of resilience from Warrior; and Sergeant Stubby is certainly one of the most courageous and inspirational animals of all time.

\* Websites were used for research.