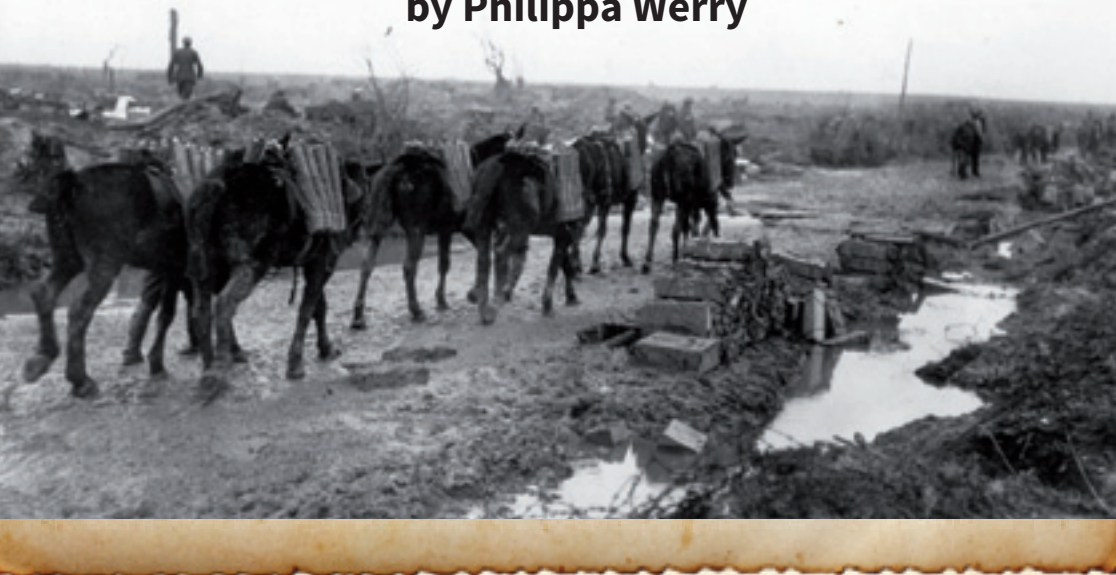


FIRST WORLD WAR MASCOTS

ANIMALS AT WAR

by Philippa Werry



War is no place for an animal – or is it?

You might be surprised to know that many animals took part in the First World War. Horses were used by the **cavalry**. They also pulled guns and supply wagons. Dogs were trained to look for wounded soldiers in “**no-man’s land**”. Cats caught rats in the trenches, homing pigeons delivered messages, and donkeys carried water and supplies.

Other animals went to war, too, but not to work. They went as mascots.

WHAT IS A MASCOT?

A mascot is used to represent a group of people or a team. Often it’s an animal or some kind of soft toy, such as a teddy bear. Some people even think that mascots bring good luck and help to achieve success.

WHY DID SOLDIERS HAVE MASCOTS?

Many New Zealand **troops** had mascots. Dogs were always popular, but there were also birds, cats, donkeys, goats, and monkeys. The soldiers kept mascots for many reasons. A mascot was a symbol for the **regiment**. It was also a friend and companion, like a pet. It added humour and fun to everyday life. A mascot was good for **morale** because it cheered up the soldiers.

Thousands of New Zealanders took part in the war. They were a long way from home and living in terrible conditions. A mascot gave them something positive to think about. It was a reminder of home and normal life. Many New Zealanders were killed and injured in the war. Some people probably hoped that their mascot would bring them good luck and keep them safe.



Paddy, the Wellington Regiment mascot, on parade in France in 1918

WHERE DID THE MASCOTS COME FROM?

Some soldiers had mascots while they were in New Zealand, and some had mascots when they were overseas.

IN NEW ZEALAND

Many soldiers spent several months in training camps before going overseas to join the fighting. The camp at Featherston was home to a number of animals. They included a goat that followed the men around and a terrier that liked to listen to the brass band.

In December 1915, a group of soldiers marched over the Rimutaka hill from the Featherston camp. They were on their way to the ships that would take them to Europe. The newspaper said that the men were “as merry as boys out for a picnic”. They sang all the way up the long, steep hill. The soldiers were led by their mascot, a playful puppy that had been practising **drill** with them.

OVERSEAS

When soldiers were overseas, they often found or bought animals that they kept as mascots. Some New Zealand and Australian soldiers bought a small donkey as a mascot while they were on leave in Cairo, Egypt. Then they had to get it back to their camp outside the city. They tried to get on a **tram**, but the conductor did not want to take the donkey. The soldiers didn't want to leave her, so they paid the donkey's fare as well as their own.

The Auckland Mounted Rifles had a Great Dane called Rona as a mascot. Some of the men met her at a train station in London. Rona was waiting with her owner on the same platform. She went over and made friends with the soldiers. The men liked her so much, and Rona seemed so happy with them, that her owner handed Rona over to them on the spot.



Above: Moses, an Egyptian donkey, was the mascot of the New Zealand Army Service Corps.

Left: A soldier in the Auckland Mounted Rifles holds a pet desert fox.

Below: Jimmy, the mascot of the Otago Mounted Rifles, has a drink.



PELORUS JACK, ABLE SEA DOG

It wasn't only soldiers in the army who had mascots. Sailors in the navy had them, too. Pelorus Jack was a bulldog that lived on the ship HMS *New Zealand*. The dog was named after a famous dolphin that used to swim beside boats in the Marlborough Sounds.

In fact, there were two dogs called Pelorus Jack. The first one joined the ship as a puppy in 1913, before the war. He used to line up with the sailors every morning for the captain's inspection.

During the war, he would stand on deck when there was fighting and bark at the exploding shells.



The first Pelorus Jack



HMS *New Zealand*, where Pelorus Jack lived

When the first Pelorus Jack died in an accident (he fell down a funnel), a second bulldog with the same name took his place. The second dog joined HMS *New Zealand* in 1916. He was on the ship during the Battle of Jutland, which was the largest naval battle of the war. Many ships were sunk, and nearly ten thousand men died. But Pelorus Jack survived.

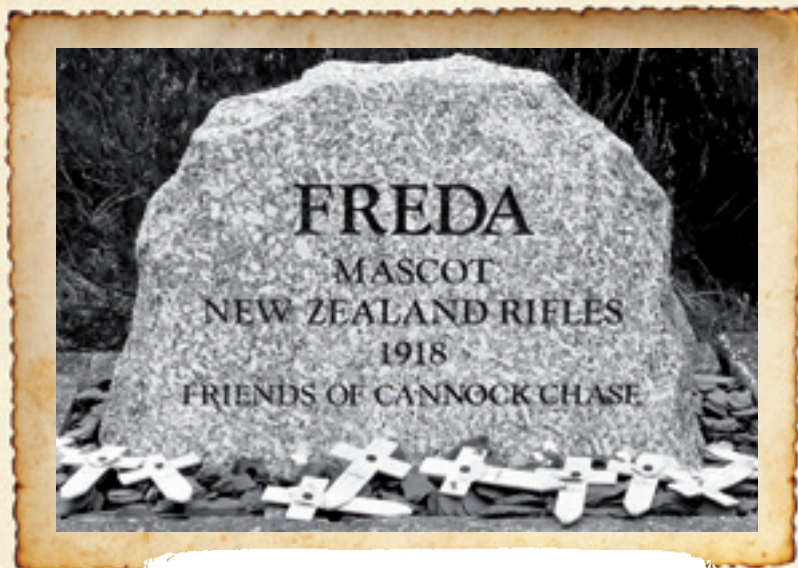
After the war, the captain of HMS *New Zealand* gave Pelorus Jack to the City of Auckland. You can still see two of his silver collars, one at the Auckland Museum and one at the Navy Museum in Devonport.

WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MASCOTS?

Not all the mascots survived the war. Some died during the fighting. A dog called Freda, the mascot of the New Zealand Rifle Brigade, has her own gravestone at Cannock Chase in England.

Many mascots were left behind when the soldiers had to move on. Several animals were given to the Cairo zoo when the troops left the city.

Most of the mascots were not allowed to return to New Zealand after the war because of **quarantine** rules. However, some were probably brought back secretly. There are stories of soldiers hiding mascots under their clothing or in their luggage. Soldiers and animals had been through a lot together, and the soldiers couldn't bear to leave their animal friends behind.



Freda's grave, at Cannock Chase in England



Corporal, the mascot of the Fighting Fifth (Reinforcements)

GLOSSARY

cavalry: soldiers who fight on horses

drill: training and practice for battle

morale: how good a person or group of people is feeling

no-man's land: the area between the two armies facing each other in battle

quarantine: when a person or animal is kept away from others for a period of time to help stop the spread of disease

regiment: a unit of soldiers in the army

tram: a passenger vehicle that is like a bus but runs on rails

troops: soldiers

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by Philippa Werry

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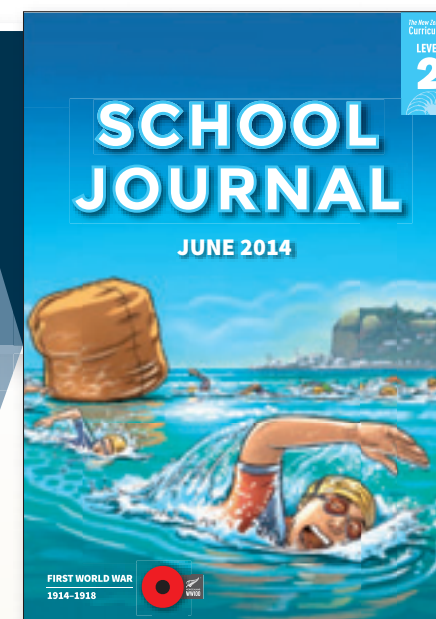
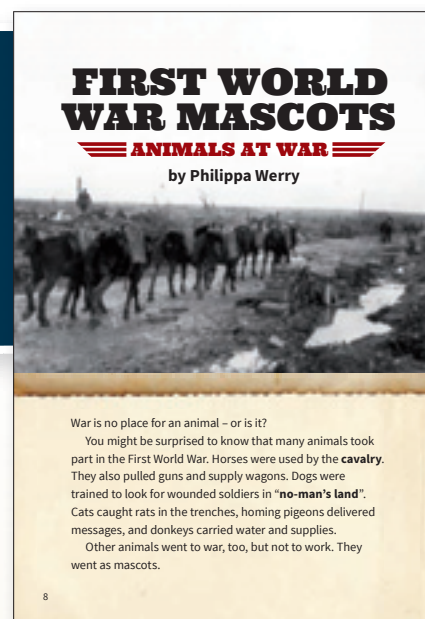
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