

# **Animals in World War One**

### Roles and functions of military dogs

Military dogs in World War One were positioned in a variety of roles, depending on their size, intelligence and training. Generally, the roles fell into the following categories.



Dogs had a vital part to play in World War One. It is estimated that by 1918, Germany had employed 30,000 dogs, Britain, France and Belgian over 20,000 and Italy 3000. Lots of dog breeds were used during World War One, but the most popular type of dogs were medium-sized, intelligent and trainable breeds. Two in particular were used because of their superior strength and could be a compared to the proper strength and trainable to the superior strength and the superior s and trainable breeds. Iwo in particular were used opecause or their superior strength, agility, territorial nature and trainability; Doberman Pinschers and German Shepherd Dogs, both native to Germany. The fact that both sides used the same type of dog together with their darker coats enabled them to slip unseen through the battlefield at night.





#### **MESSENGER DOGS**

Dogs were used as messengers Dogs were used as messengers because field communications were always difficult. Human runners were potentially large targets and were weighted down by uniforms so dogs were the obvious solution. A trained dog was faster than a human runner, presented less of a target to a sniper and could travel over any terrain. An example was a dog that travelled 4000 metres on the Western Front with an important message 4000 metres on the vivestern Front with an important message to a brigade's headquarters in less than sixty minutes. All other methods of communicating with the headquarters had failed - but the dog had got through



### **SENTRY DOGS**

These dogs stayed with one soldier or guard and were taught to give a warning sound such as growling or barking. Dobermans have traditionally been used as sentry dogs and are still widely used today as guard dogs.



# The British Bulldog

The British bulldog was used as a symbol of British character, tenacious and fiercely defensive of our country and way of life. It was used in recruitment posters like this one to encourage men and women to 'do their bit' for the

## **DOGS IN GAS MASKS**

All animals at the front needed to be protected against gas attacks.



# SCOUT DOGS





### **DOGS AS FRIENDS**

Dogs also had another role to play on the Western Front. For men trapped in the horrors of trench warfare, a dog in the trenches (whether a messenger dog or not) was a psychological comfort that took away, if only for a short time, the horrors they lived through. For many soldiers on any of the sides that fought in the trenches, a dog must have reminded them of home comforts.





Other Animals

Used in WW1.

### Pigeons and World War One

Pigeons played a vital part in World War One as they proved to be an extremely reliable way of sending messages. Such was the importance of pigeons that over 100,000 were used in the war with an astonishing success rate of 95% getting through to their destination with their message.

The role of pigeons clearly had a direct impact on the outcome of the war. One famous case occurred In October 1918 when a pigeon carried information about the location of 194 American soldiers who were trapped by the Germans The pigeon's name was Cher Ami. When released it flew 25 miles from behind German lines to the Americans headquarters in just 25 minutes. Despite being shot in the chest Cher Ami delivered the message and the Americans launched a rescue and the 194 men were saved.













DEFENCE OF THE REALM

SHOOTING HOMING PIGEONS