



The Horse at War

Danny's Story

There are no existing records of the animals which lived and worked on the Elvaston estate up to and during the First World War. When the Earls of Harrington were forced to sell the estate to pay death duties all the records were destroyed. In order to examine the impact of the war on the animals, especially the horses, we have created a fictional character – Danny. Even though Danny did not exist his story is based on historical information.

Danny can't speak for himself so we will speak for him.



Travelling to France was another strange experience. We were very frightened as we were each put into a sling and carried high into the air and landed onto a ship which moved under our hooves.

It wasn't too bad once we were on board the ship. We were tied up in stalls which were quite similar to the stables we had been used to although they were not big enough for us to lie down as we could in our stables at home. Also we couldn't get out of them to walk around.

But the food was good. We had oats and hay and plenty of carrots and as much water as we needed.

We arrived in France after ages of rolling around and were taken off the boat in the same way as we were put on. Our legs felt very strange and wobbly when we got on to the dock.

We were all taken to an area where we were given lots of hay and a chance to stretch our legs. France seemed the same as home but there were hundreds of us everywhere. We were given different jobs to do. Some pulled wagons of supplies, some pulled guns, some pulled wagons called ambulances and some like me were given to a soldier to ride.



I was born on the Elvaston estate. My mother was one of the Earl Harrington's prize brood mares. I grew up with the other young horses on the big field

called Oak Flats. We had a lot of fun running around and teasing our mothers.

We had plenty of food and grew up big and strong.



When I was old enough I was trained to carry a rider and was often taken out hunting by the Earl and his friends.

When I was five this happy life changed. It seems that there was a war and horses were needed to help in the fighting. I didn't want to leave my home but I wasn't the only one to go as many of the other horses went as well and some of the men who worked with us.

At first we all went to a place where we were taught how to gallop towards a particular object. Many weeks later I found out that we were learning how to charge at soldiers with guns. A really nice lady rode me while we were training. I liked her and she cried when we had to leave to travel to a place called France.



SUGGESTED DAILY RATION FOR HORSES ON BOARD SHIP

Bran	6lbs
Hay	17lbs
or	
Oats	3lbs
Bran	3lbs
Hay	17lbs

THE GOVERNMENT DAILY FORAGE SCALE FOR REMOUNTS AT SEA

Oats	4lbs
Bran	6lbs
Hay	12lbs

Also, 4cwt. nitre, 5cwt. rock salt, plus 100 gallons vinegar, and 2 tons linseed are allowed for each shipment.

My soldier was very nice. He talked to me and I began to feel less homesick. He was in charge of a lot of soldiers who were also on horseback. We all had to carry a lot of things as well as our riders. I carried a bag with my soldier's clothes in front of my saddle, his greatcoat was rolled up and tied behind the saddle. We also had a head rope, a nose bag, a body brush, a rubber, a canvas bucket, two spare horse shoes, a sword, a picketing peg and a

saddle blanket. Luckily my soldier was thin and so the weight wasn't too bad.

We then had to get on to trains. This was very frightening as it was so noisy. At least we were able to walk on. It was like going up the ramp of a horse box which we often used to do when the Earl went to Nottinghamshire to hunt.

There was a lot of waiting around in all our equipment.

Once we were ready our riders mounted us and we went to a place I heard my soldier call "The front line" It was very noisy with smoke and flashes of light and huge bangs and earth and rocks flying up into the air. We were very frightened and our riders had a hard time keeping us going.

As we rode along we came to a place where lots of horses were lying down. As we got closer we could see that they were dead. Some soldiers on horses were with them and I could see that some of them were crying.



We walked along for quite a while in all the noise and dust. When it went quiet our soldiers tied us up behind a place called "the trenches" and went into the trenches.

After a while there was a huge bang and the

trenches all collapsed. We were very frightened.

Soldiers were shouting and crying and a lot of us horses were hurt.

I was hurt. I've never been hurt before and this was really bad. I was bleeding so badly.



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