

MEDIA EXHIBITION OVERVIEW

A is for Animals

A is for Animals offers an A to Z of animals in war, from mascots and messengers to creepy-crawlies. Animals are put to many uses in war. Sometimes they have jobs to do, are used as mascots and pets, or are symbols on badges and flags. This exhibition also looks at the unwelcome animals that make life in the field even more difficult and dangerous.

The exhibition has been developed with a young audience in mind, but visitors of all ages will enjoy its fascinating and moving stories.

The Australian War Memorial is open every day (except Christmas Day) from 10am – 5pm.

***A is for Animals* is open from Friday 27 February – Wednesday 22 July 2009.**

The Australian War Memorial's Travelling Exhibitions Program is funded by the Australian Government's Commemorations Program.

A is for Animal

A is for Animal provides an overview of the exhibition and the different ways animals were used in war, before visitors see the rest of the exhibition.

During war, animals have been used to help soldiers – pigeons carried messages, horses and donkeys moved soldiers and supplies, and tracker dogs helped save the lives of soldiers. Sometimes pictures of animals were used as mascots, and would be put on badges and flags. But sometimes they were real mascots, like Spaghetti.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/MEA0501>

The exhibition also includes animals that made life difficult for the soldiers, such as insects and rats.

B is for Bird

Pigeons were used in great numbers during the First World War. They were very effective in carrying messages back from the front line and weren't badly affected by gas or noise. Despite advances in technology, they were still useful during the Second World War when modern equipment was unavailable or failed to work.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/075236>

C is for Camel

Australian soldiers used camels in the First World War to transport men and equipment in the Middle East and North Africa. Unlike horses, camels did not charge into battle, but they could travel great distances without water and carry heavy loads. However, camels could be difficult to train and handle which was both frustrating and funny for the men of the Imperial Camel Corps.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P03631.007>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ARTV04340>

D is for Dog

Dogs are one of the main military working animals today. Their strong sense of smell is used to help find weapons or explosives and to search for the enemy. In the past they have been used as messengers and are still a popular choice as military mascots and pets. During the First World War dogs were trained to work in battle conditions and not be affected by the sound of guns and explosions. Many different breeds and sizes of dogs were used as messengers. The big dogs could leap over obstacles and the small dogs could wriggle through little space. Sometimes, even well-trained dogs could be caught by the other side.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM04369>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/E02318>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/H09579>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/EKN/67/0098/VN>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/BEL/69/0358/VN>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/021160>

E is for Emotion

The stories of animals in war are often sad. Animals, like people, suffer and die in conflict. They have to live under terrible conditions and carry out dangerous jobs. But in the horror of war, animals often remind people of their humanity. To care for and show affection to an animal can be a great comfort to someone who is far from home, frightened and lonely.

Animals can make people feel strong emotions simply by the way they look at us.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ARTV00047>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART19679>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/053601>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/013225>

F is for Food

Feeding an army is a big job, especially when the army includes thousands of animals. When animals are used in war, they cannot roam around looking for grass and food has to be provided for them.

An army cannot march on an empty stomach. The bad news for many animals is that they are often used for food.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART02555>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/017009>

G for Gallant

Animals in war face many dangers. They act as their training and instincts tell them, but have to be brave and determined to do their job. There are many stories of animals showing great courage as they deliver messages, rescue mates, search for the enemy, or transport heavy loads. A few animals have been formally recognised for their gallantry with bravery awards such as the Dickin Medal.

In 1997, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) awarded Murphy a Purple Cross. The medal was for Murphy and all of Simpson's donkeys "for the exceptional work they performed on behalf of humans while under continual fire at Gallipoli".

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/J06392>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL25365>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM30785>

H is for Horse

Horses have been the main military working animal for thousands of years. It is only in the last 50 years that machines have taken the place of horses in war. Australians used horses to transport both soldiers and equipment, often in difficult and dangerous places.

The famous Light Horse regiments fought many battles on Gallipoli and in the Middle East during the First World War. Their heroic stories and images have become part of our national identity.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/E01054>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL/04227.005>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P05290.001>

I is for Insect

Insects are found in nearly every place on earth, so it is no surprise that Australians in war have had many experiences with creepy-crawlies. Flies breed in dead bodies and spread disease, mosquito bites bring deadly malaria, and body lice crawl into every nook and cranny.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ARTV05245>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ARTV07615>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ERR/68/0854/VN>

J is for Jungle

Australians are very skilled jungle fighters, having served in places such as New Guinea, Malaya, Borneo, and Vietnam. Jungles are difficult places to fight in – an enemy can

easily hide in dense forest, waiting to spring an ambush. Snakes, spiders, scorpions, and leeches can also get you. Birds and monkeys, startled by a patrol trying to move quietly through the undergrowth, can make noise that will give away the soldiers' position.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/JON/70/0367/VN>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/OG0244>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART22847>

K is for Kangaroo

There is no doubt that the kangaroo is one of the world's unique animals. It is instantly recognisable as a symbol of Australia. For Australians serving overseas, the kangaroo is a reminder of home. While they are not a working animal like horses and dogs, they are often chosen as a pet, ornament or mascot by the military.

One of the most popular symbols for Australians is the boxing kangaroo. It was inspired by a travelling boxing show which had kangaroos boxing with men. Boxing kangaroos were painted on Australian fighter aeroplanes of the 21st Squadron based in Singapore and Malaya during the Second World War.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM07953>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/C02588>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL23902.100>

L is for Luck

Since ancient times, people have observed the behaviour of animals to tell the future. Many animals are thought to bringing good fortune, while others represent bad luck. Mascots for military units are believed to be lucky. For some soldiers, surviving a war is a matter of luck and they will take any help they can get.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/002451>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART92197>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL31689>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL38776>

M is for Mascot

There is a long tradition of using animal mascots to represent the navy, army, and air force. All creatures great and small have featured as mascots. Some start as pets before they are officially adopted as mascots. Many are given a rank and a number, and are even awarded medals for service. Many mascots live with their units, while others, such as lions, tigers, and bears, are kept in zoos.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P01835.014>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P04968.003>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/015551>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ERR/68/0849/VN>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/052601>

N is for Noise

Animals make noises – they woof, neigh, moo, meow. And they hear noises, often before humans can.

This cockatoo took up residence with an anti-aircraft battery in Darwin. When a bombing raid was on, he would fly around shrieking “Get under the sink, Harry”

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART21686>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/025238>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/044608>

O is for Ornament

Animal images, sometimes even bits of them, are used as ornaments to decorate military uniforms and objects.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL35798>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL34538>

P is for Pet

A pet can give friendship and comfort to soldiers far from home.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P02876.001>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM09411>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P05328.001>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/015549>

Q is for Quarantine

There are many sad animal stories because of Australia’s strict quarantine controls. Thousands of horses were left behind and pigeons were killed because it was too risky to allow them to be brought home.

Even when soldiers knew the rules, they tried to get around them by smuggling in favourite pets or mascots. In March and April 1942 quarantine officers seized 21 dogs, 17 monkeys, 3 squirrels, a cat, a rabbit, a parrot, and other birds found aboard returning troopships. They were all destroyed. Australia’s agricultural industries could have been ruined if dangerous diseases were brought into the country on these animals.

Today, Australia’s military working dogs can return to Australia after serving overseas. Strict health rules have to be followed while they are away, and the dogs are quarantined for at least 28 days when they return.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/076878>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/076877>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/LES/69/0870/VN>

R is for Remember

All around the world there are memorials that help us to remember those people who have died in war. But there are also reminders that animals have also played their part.

Large memorial sculptures featuring horses, camels or donkeys can be found in many cities and towns.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/127101>

S for Symbol

Australian military units have badges that are worn on the hat or tunic. Australian animals are often represented on these badges.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL34423>

Aircraft “nose art” often includes animal symbols. Sometimes these animals are shown attacking symbols that represent the enemy

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P01274.008>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/NEA0328>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/P03522.003>

Sometimes badges feature animals that give clues to where the Australian units were located. The scorpion and camel are common in the Middle East. But have you ever seen a shark riding a camel? The cloth patch was worn by airmen whose Sea King helicopter had the call sign “Shark22”.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL33583>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/REL30738>

T is for Transport

For thousands of years animals have been used to carry soldiers and supplies.

Horses, mules, donkeys, and camels worked hard transporting soldiers and equipment in the First World War. Throughout the Second World War, animals were again used for transport, and still are to this day, particularly in areas where vehicles cannot go.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/E00963>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART03329>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/002074>

U is for Unusual

Using animals in unusual ways – what will they think of next?

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM31374>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/001583>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/140486>

V is for Vet

Any army that uses animals needs to have veterinary units. The Australian Army Veterinary Corps was formed in 1909 and served through two world wars. Its vets looked after thousands of horses, mules, donkeys, and camels. They had to treat everything from bullet wounds to severe cuts from explosions and barbed wire. Animals also suffered from exposure and disease.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/E04439>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/064617>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/3DRL/2946>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART03312>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/MELJ0792>

W is for Welfare

Animals need constant care and attention, particularly when they are required to do jobs in war. As well as regular feeding, animals have to be kept safe from harm and free from disease. In return, they help look after the welfare of people by being companions and mates.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/SKE/67/1139/VN>
<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM08024>

Gas attacks can be harmful to animals as well as humans. Soldiers can protect themselves by using gas masks, but what about animals?

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM04098>

X is for X-files

The “X-files” contain the unexplained and secret stories of animals in war.

Redlead was a grey tabby cat and the mascot of HMAS *Perth*. She had lived for many months on the ship and was well looked after. She even had her own hammock. But Redlead had decided that life at sea was not for her. Some “cat-sense” told her that her nine lives were almost used up.

Perth was in port, having survived some intense battles with the Japanese navy. As soon as the ship was tied up at the wharf, Redlead crept down the gangway. But before she could make good her escape, one of the sailors grabbed her and carried her back on board.

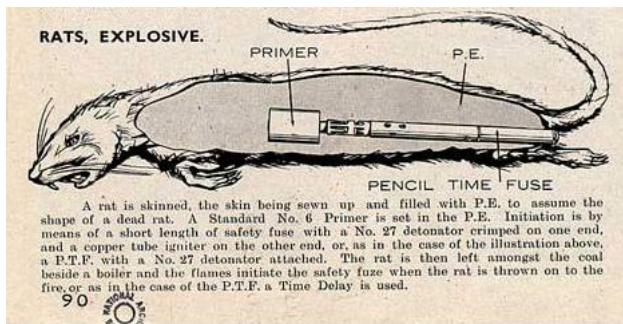
Redlead waited a while as the crew went about their jobs. When the sailors were distracted, she tried to sneak ashore again. But once more she was nabbed and returned to the ship. Just before the *Perth* was due to set sail, Redlead made one last dash for freedom – and failed for a third time. Clearly the sailors wanted their good luck mascot on board.

But for Redlead and the crew of *Perth*, luck had run out. Four hours after leaving port, the ship encountered a Japanese fleet. For a full hour the battle raged, until *Perth* was hit by a torpedo and the captain gave the order to abandon ship. Of the 680 men aboard, half were killed in action, including one little tabby cat called Redlead.

There are no photographs of Redlead.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ART24483>

One of the more bizarre animals of war was the British exploding rat. The bodies of dead rats were filled with plastic explosives – the idea was that when the rats were shovelled along with coal into boilers, they would explode, causing significant damage. However, the first shipment of carcasses was intercepted by the Germans, and the plan was dropped.



(no weblink, refer PROP04905)

Y is for Yuck

Life in the trenches was very difficult for soldiers in the First World War. There was the constant threat of bullets and exploding shells, the cold and mud, the lice and flies. But for many it was the rats that made life almost unbearable. With thousands of dead bodies – both human and animal – to feed off, rats grew to the size of small cats and bred in great numbers. They spread disease, ate food supplies, and scurried over everything. In times of extreme cold they would even try to snuggle up to sleeping soldiers.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/ARTV03697>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/RELAWM16602>

Z is for Zoo

Working animals in war include horses, donkeys, mules, camels, dogs, and pigeons. But if you consider the range of animals that are used as mascots and symbols, as well as wild animals and pests, you would have enough to cover almost every letter of the alphabet.

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/BEL/69/0488/VN>

<http://cas.awm.gov.au/item/000845>

Further information:

Leigh Harris (02) 6243 4575 0409 600 038

onlocation@awm.gov.au

24 February 2009