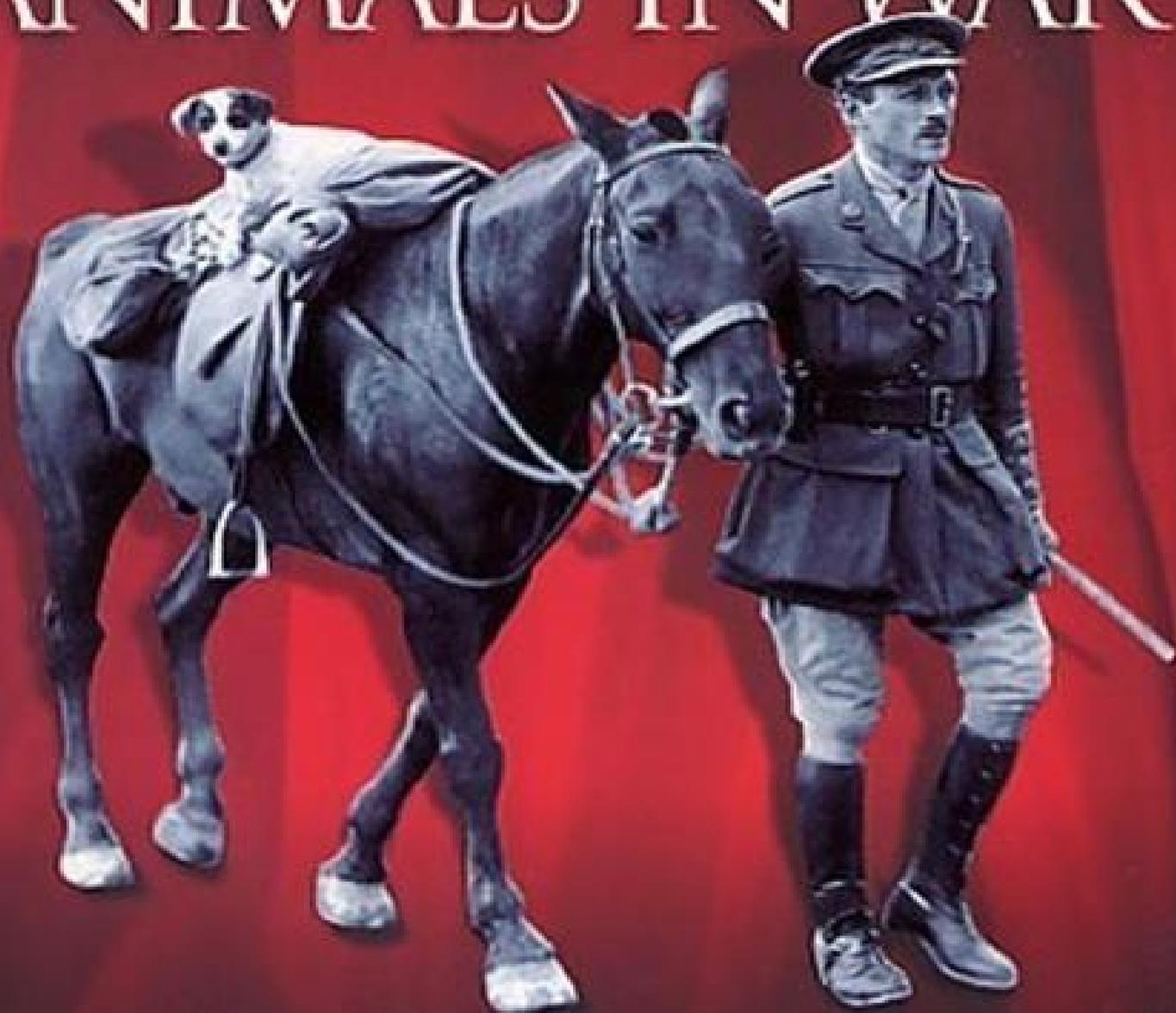


A passionate and moving account of the role
of animals on the battlefields of the world

JILLY COOPER

ANIMALS IN WAR



About the Book

Pigeons carrying vital messages to and from the beleaguered city during the Siege of Paris; horses and mules struggling through miles of fetid mud to bring ammunition to the front in the Great War; dogs sniffing out mines for the British invasion force in the Second World War – countless brave animals have played their part in the long, cruel history of war. Some have won medals for gallantry - like G.I. Joe, the American pigeon who saved 100 British lives in Italy, and Rob, the black and white mongrel who made over twenty parachute jumps with the SAS. Too many others have died abandoned, in agony and alone, after serving their country with distinction.

Jilly Cooper has here written a tribute to the role of animals in wartime. It is a tragic and horrifying story - yet it has its lighter moments too: a hilarious game of musical chairs played on camels during the Desert Campaign; and the budgie who remarked, when carried from a bombed-out East End tenement, 'This is my night out'.

Animals in War is a vivid and unforgettable record of man's inhumanity to animals, but also an astonishing story of courage, intelligence, devotion and resilience.

Jilly Cooper

ANIMALS IN WAR



CORGI BOOKS

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About the Author

Jilly Cooper is a journalist, writer and media superstar. The author of many number one bestselling novels, she lives in Gloucestershire with her husband Leo, her rescue greyhound Feather and her black cat Feral.

She was appointed OBE in 2004 for services to literature, and in 2009 was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Letters by the University of Gloucestershire for her contribution to literature and services to the County.

Find out more about Jilly Cooper at her website www.jillycooper.co.uk

By Jilly Cooper

FICTION

RIDERS
RIVALS
POLO

THE MAN WHO MADE HUSBANDS JEALOUS

APPASSIONATA

SCORE!

PANDORA

WICKED!

JUMP!

NON-FICTION

ANIMALS IN WAR

CLASS

HOW TO SURVIVE CHRISTMAS

HOTFOOT TO ZABRISKIE POINT (*with Patrick Lichfield*)

INTELLIGENT AND LOYAL

JOLLY MARSUPIAL

JOLLY SUPER

JOLLY SUPERLATIVE

JOLLY SUPER TOO

SUPER COOPER

SUPER JILLY

SUPER MEN AND SUPER WOMEN

THE COMMON YEARS

TURN RIGHT AT THE SPOTTED DOG

WORK AND WEDLOCK

ANGELS RUSH IN

ARAMINTA'S WEDDING

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

LITTLE MABEL

LITTLE MABEL'S GREAT ESCAPE

LITTLE MABEL SAVES THE DAY

LITTLE MABEL WINS

ROMANCE

BELLA

EMILY

HARRIET

IMOGEN

LISA & CO

OCTAVIA

PRUDENCE

ANTHOLOGIES

THE BRITISH IN LOVE

VIOLETS AND VINEGAR

To Leo

AUTHOR'S NOTE

I am extremely grateful to the people who have helped me with this book. Heading the list must be the staff of the Imperial War Museum, including Dr Christopher Dowling and Angela Godwin, the Keeper and Deputy Keeper of the Department of Education and Publications, who thought up the idea in the first place, and were continually kind, encouraging and unstinting with their time and ideas; and secondly Dr Gwyn Bayliss, Keeper of the Department of Printed Books, who fell over backwards to let me have access to his books at all times. I would also like to thank the staff of Dr Dowling's department who spent so much time laboriously photostatting documents, and digging out photographs – marked 'IWM' where they appear – and to the museum warders who so cheerfully guided me round the museum on the numerous occasions when I got lost. (In the case of photographs with no attribution, the copyright holder is unknown though prints may be in the archives of the Imperial War Museum.)

I also owe a particular debt of gratitude to J.M. Brereton, whose touching and beautifully written book, *The Horse in War*, was a constant inspiration to me when I wrote the two chapters about the horse; and to Henry Harris, who drew my attention to that wonderfully funny volume, *Mascots and Pets of the Regiments* by Major T.J. Edwards. I am also grateful to Lt.-Col. C.H.T. MacFetridge and Major J. P. Warren for their permission to quote from two stories in their book, *Tales of the Mountain Gunners*, and to the authors of those stories, General B. Daunt and Major J. Nettlefield. Nor would this book have been written without help from the various histories of the PDSA and the RSPCA, and the official histories in both wars of the RAVC.

I should like to offer a tremendous thanks to Lt.-Col. Keith Morgan Jones of the RAVC who not only entertained me most splendidly at their headquarters at Melton Mowbray, but also lent me every help while I was writing the book. My particular thanks also go to Jane Tebb and Olive Martyn of the RSPCA and Clarissa Baldwin of the Canine Defence League who all provided me with excellent material, as did Mrs L.V. Travis, editor of that splendidly august journal: *The British Mule Society Magazine*.

May I also express my gratitude to all those readers of *The Times* and the *Daily Telegraph* who so promptly and generously answered my advertisement for stories of animals in war, and to Tonie and Valmai Holt for giving me the run of their magnificent postcard collection. I must thank Beryl Hill too for impeccably typing the manuscript, and David Godwin and Louise Bloomfield for editing it.

Above all, however, I am grateful to my own household: Claudia Wolfers, who dealt with the correspondence, and who with Stanley and Vivian Hicks, looked after me, and made it possible, just after we moved to Gloucestershire, for me to isolate myself from the packing chests and the burst pipes, and to finish the book.

It only remains for me to thank my husband, Leo Cooper, for his photographic contributions to the book. By his vision, kindness, wide knowledge of military matters, and sense of humour, he is really the only begetter.

INTRODUCTION

One of the proudest moments of my life was when Dr Christopher Dowling of the Imperial War Museum asked me to write a book about the role animals have played in war to coincide with an exhibition on the same subject, which the Museum were planning to stage in the summer of 1983. For a dizzy moment, like the clown asked to play Hamlet, I felt I was being taken seriously as a writer.

It was only when I started work that I realized how singularly ill-equipped I was to write this book. For a start, I knew very little about *military* history. Being married to a military history publisher, Leo Cooper, for twenty-one years, has been rather like working in a sweet shop. I soon developed a complete block about the subject, and out of the 400 military books he has published, I had shamefully to confess I had read less than half a dozen. As a woman, I suspect I am not alone in having this block. In the same way that some men spurn novels, particularly romantic fiction, women tend to avoid war books, as being an exclusively guts-and-glory male province.

Having given up geography at twelve and history at seventeen (and being at a school where history stopped abruptly with Queen Victoria), I began writing from a position of total ignorance. I kept getting the First and Second World Wars dreadfully mixed up. How very inconsiderate, for example, of the Italians to have been our allies in the First World War, and not the Second. Geography posed even more of a problem, and the house rang with wails of ‘Where the hell’s Mesopotamia?’ and ‘Whatever happened to Salonika?’

Apart from getting my Salonika’s in a twist, nothing had prepared me for the horror of the subject matter. I had no idea that eight million horses died in the Great War – imagine a capacity crowd at Wembley on Cup Final day, then multiply it by 80, and that’s about the figure. I had no idea that camels, elephants, mules, oxen, pigeons, dogs and cats perished in their thousands, often from starvation, cold and exhaustion, or because the soldiers had absolutely no idea how to look after them.

This is not a pretty story – it has been written with tears, not ink. Locked away in my study day after day, the material was so harrowing, I was in despair that I would ever be able to finish the book. But gradually I succumbed to the fascination of the subject. For with military history you put your finger on the pulse of all history, and so open the jewel box of the past. Gradually I realized too that it was not just a dry-as-dust subject dealing with tactics and strategies, but a story as full as any great novel of hatreds, petty jealousies, bumbling incompetence, burning ambition, and above all love. For where animals are concerned there is always love. One thinks of the Indian muleteers paid £1.20 a month, who refused ever to go on leave because they couldn’t bear to be parted from their beloved mules, or the German horse who stopped in the middle of a cavalry charge, and trotted back to comfort his dying master until a shell killed them both, or of the bedraggled mongrel in the trenches running desperately from soldier to soldier, gradually coming to the end of his little strength as he frantically searched for his missing master.

Fortunately too where animals are concerned, comedy is never far away either. As each chapter was started, and I became acquainted with each new animal, I would wander downstairs announcing: ‘I must have a mule, they’re so wonderful,’ or ‘Do you think we could find room in the paddock for a baby camel, or even an ox, they’re

so terribly brave?’

As I type this introduction, my two dogs sleep sleekly beneath the table, and a large black cat purrs in my In tray. Across the valley, cows and sheep graze safely in the fields, and among them two beautiful slightly muddy grey horses suddenly kick up their heels and, full of the joy of life, break into a gallop, manes and tails streaming. This is how animals should live, not dragged, terrified and suffering, into our human conflicts.

I am well aware that many many aspects of animals in war have been covered sketchily, some not at all, but if this book should make a few people aware of the immeasurable debt we owe to the animal kingdom for our freedom today, I shall be very happy.

Gloucestershire, 1983

FOREWORD TO THE NEW EDITION

Animals in War was first published in 1983, sold very well, was serialized in the *Mail on Sunday* and attracted a great deal of attention. Now I would like to thank my publishers Transworld for reissuing it in this lovely new edition, to spearhead a campaign to erect a long overdue memorial to *Animals in War*.

The memorial will be dedicated to all the animals who lived and died (in most cases) in the service of their country. At the time of writing, no firm decision has been made on the location of such a memorial, but it will certainly be in a prominent place in central London. A sculptor who came up with a wonderfully moving concept has been chosen. Funds, with a splendid kick-start from our sponsors Petplan, are already being raised. The royalties from this book will add to them.

It would be marvellous to write that the sufferings of animals in war are now a thing of the past. Alas, it is not so. We all remember Sefton and the slaughter of the Household Cavalry horses in Hyde Park. Horses today gladden our hearts with their jangling beauty on ceremonial occasions, but with mules they are also employed on dangerous missions abroad, resupplying troops far more stealthily and quietly than any helicopter.

Remember too that dogs are very much front line troops in various activities throughout the armed forces, tracking down the enemy and sniffing out explosives. They also guard our troops and their depots, and have the heartbreak of having to re-bestow their love and loyalty to a new handler every few months, when the old one is posted on. Nor can these dogs serving so gallantly abroad expect a peaceful and happy retirement back home. Instead they are invariably put down to avoid the expense of six months in quarantine, which will soon, God willing, be a thing of the past.

Animals have a happier time raising morale as mascots. The noble wolfhound of the Irish Guards and the jaunty goat of the Royal Welch Fusiliers are splendid examples. But countless others are used to test explosives, chemical weapons and a wide number of vaccines and have died agonizing, hideous deaths.

One can only hope that our memorial will serve as a constant reminder of the literally millions of animals who perished in our service and for their countries and how appallingly we treated them. When people pass this memorial perhaps they will remember not just the horses and the dogs, but the mules, camels, oxen, elephants, pigeons, cats, canaries and many more. Even the tiny glow-worm guided soldiers in the First World War.

Remember them all. They had no choice.

JILLY COOPER

Gloucestershire, 2000