

Shining a 'Light of Peace' for the Animals that served

While we remember the men and women who gave service and sacrifice, we are also honouring the role that animals played in the D-Day landings of June 6, 1944, securing the peace we all enjoy today. Dogs and pigeons were among the courageous animals who served a vital role before and on that historic day.



Dogs, like Woody here, were trained to sniff out explosives and mines and to keep watch to warn of the approach of enemy soldiers. To get dogs into Normandy as soon as possible some were even parachuted in - the so-called Para-dogs. They were taught to get used to wartime conditions, like aircraft propellers and loud noises. They were also trained to identify the smell of explosives.

As the D-Day landings began, Brian, an Alsatian, was parachuted into the town of Ranville but became stuck in a tree on his way down, injuring his face. His fellow paratrooper Sgt Ken Bailey cut Brian down from the tree despite being under fire and the pair fought together over the next few months. He was presented with the Dickin Medal – the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross - on March 29, 1947, with the citation: 'For excellent patrol work and qualifying as a paratrooper, Airborne Division, Normandy, June 1944.'



Days before D-Day, a pigeon named Duke of Normandy was dropped in Merville with paratroopers from the 21st Army Group. Their mission was to ensure that four heavy-calibre guns trained directly on Sword Beach were taken out of action. Many of the troops failed

to make the rendezvous and critically, radios were lost. Their only way to get a message back was to release Duke of Normandy with news of the operation's success. Duke's journey home took almost 27 hours. He flew through bullets



and bombs, driving rain and a Northerly gale as he made his way back across the Channel. His heroics delivered critical intelligence to the Allied Command and saved many lives. And for his bravery he too was awarded the Dickin Medal.

The Animal Purple Poppy Fund was established from The War Horse Memorial, a national and Commonwealth monument built in Ascot, Berkshire, to honour the animals of the two World Wars. It seeks to raise money to support animal charities and The Household Cavalry Foundation. With my co-Founder Alan Carr MBE, we will be encouraging our affiliated charities across the UK, America, and the Commonwealth - primarily Australia and New Zealand - to buy a Lamp Light of Peace, and to light it at 9.15 pm on June 6, 2024 (local time) to coincide with the lighting of the Beacons, to shine a light on the animals who also served.



We encourage all dog and pigeon lovers therefore, to support D-Day 80, by purchasing and lighting a Lamp Light of Peace, as their 'tribute' to the amazing animals that served us all during the D-Day campaign and WWII as a whole.

Please see the Lamp Light of Peace page on the D-Day 80 website www.d-day80beacons.co.uk

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Osborne".

Susan Osborne
Co-Founder The War Horse Memorial CIC

