

0. HORSES in WORLD WAR I - Story Preface

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WILL YOU STAND FOR THIS?



INTO CAPTIVITY-A SCENE IN A BELGIAN TOWN.

Printed in Great Britain, this WWI propaganda poster was distributed in Queensland, Australia. It depicts events in Belgium as German soldiers invaded that country. The point was to encourage Australians to volunteer for military service to help the people of Europe fight against the Central Powers. Image online, courtesy Boston University.

If an army from Germany wanted to capture part of France, during August of 1914, one way to accomplish that goal was to send German troops to France via Belgium. Such a path, however, was closed to Germany - and everyone else - because the Belgian people had declared their neutrality in 1839.

Britain had agreed to help maintain Belgium's neutral status. If a foreign army invaded Belgium, British troops would help their ally to resist the invasion.

By the 5th of August, 1914, German forces were on their way to France after crossing the German-Belgian border. Their first stop was Liege where numerous forts protected the Belgian city. This action by Germany caused Britain to send soldiers - known as the British Expeditionary Force (BEF) - to Belgium.

It is fair to wonder ... parenthetically ... about this early move in the war. Germany was allied with Austria, and Austria's fight was with Serbia - for the assassination of Austria's heir to the throne - so why were German troops heading to France?

The short answer is ... France was an ally of Russia which had declared its support of Serbia in its conflict with Austria-Hungary. If that seems like an unsatisfactory answer, which still leaves us wondering, also consider this fact: A prior war, between France and Germany, had left territorial issues unsettled.

Germany and France both believed that Alsace-Lorraine - a key area in Southeastern France - belonged to them. Was that a different motive for war?

Whatever the real reason for Germany's violation of Belgian neutrality ... after German troops invaded Belgium, Britain declared war on Germany because of its alliance with Belgium. King George V - Britain's constitutional monarch and the German Kaiser's first cousin - was unable to keep his countrymen out of the misery.

As young men throughout the United Kingdom volunteered for war, a simultaneous effort began to purchase war animals - including horses - to be used wherever and however they were needed. Britain's army needed at least 500,000 more horses than the 25,000 available at the start of the conflict.

Initially transported to the continent by ship, and then by rail, British men and animals were thereafter left to cope with the lack of good roads as they sloshed about on mud-soaked terrain. Little progress on that point changed, from one long year to the next.

Able to prevent German troops from advancing to the English Channel - thereby denying Germany's desire to control all the "Channel ports" in Belgium and France - Allied troops had to "dig in." That meant living in the dug-out earth - in "shelters" called "trenches." The Germans were forced to do the same.

Battle after battle, and death after death, did little to accomplish anything as the war dragged on. Cheering, at the beginning of the conflict, quickly gave way to the reality of misery.

Many of the fighting men didn't even understand the war's purpose (or how their sacrifices would benefit anyone back home). Still, they believed, it was important to defeat the enemy.

In an interesting turn-of-events, perhaps demonstrating the depth of animosity toward their rulers, some Austrian Slavs decided to take-up arms against Austria. Surviving photos show their arrival at an Allied port.

Combatants on all sides relied on horses, and war pictures reveal the role which horses filled during World War I. Let's take a look at some of them:

- Before it went to war, a horse was auctioned;

- Then it was transported, by ship, to France;
- Britain did not have enough horses, so military men bought more from Canada and the United States;
- French people also sold their horses at auction.
- Horses pulled, or carried, supplies throughout war-torn countrysides;
- Sometimes they got stuck in the Flanders mud;
- Austrian pack horses carried ammo to the front lines;
- They also pulled field guns into position;
- Occasionally, a horse carried someone like the German Kaiser.
- British cavalry horses were tethered, behind man-made dugouts, between missions;
- An important part of the war effort, horses needed their own supplies at the front lines;
- They also needed their own vet hospitals
- And ... their own burial grounds.

Trenches - those earthen dug-outs which housed men, lice and rats - were also sometimes used by horses (once they were abandoned by troopers). What was it like to live in the trenches and to venture into the "no man's land" between the two opposing sides?

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HORSES-in-WORLD-WAR-I-War-Horse)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/HORSES-in-WORLD-WAR-I-War-Horse>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HORSES-in-WORLD-WAR-I-War-Horse)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/HORSES-in-WORLD-WAR-I-War-Horse>

Questions 2 Ponder

Why Did People Use Animals as Weapons of War?

Until warring people had mechanized weapons, they used horses - and other animals - to help them fight, and win, their battles.

What do you think about using horses - and other animals - as weapons of war? Would today's attitudes about animal protection prevent the use of horses during a 21st-century war?

Are today's attitudes toward protecting animals, in general, any different than those attitudes were between 1914-1918?

Albert displays enormous affection for Joey, his thoroughbred horse. Have you ever loved an animal the way Albert loves Joey? Explain your answer.

Media Stream

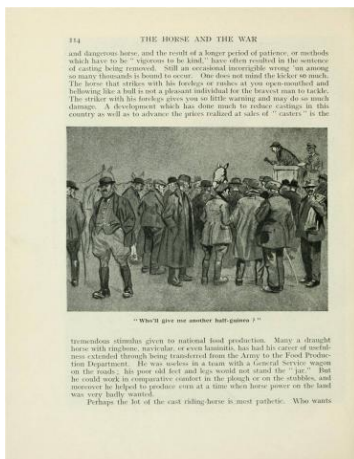


War Horse - Austrian Slavs Fight Against Austria

Photo from the *New York Times*, January 7, 1917 - online via [Photos of the Great War Gallery](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Austrian-Slavs-Fight-Against-Austria>

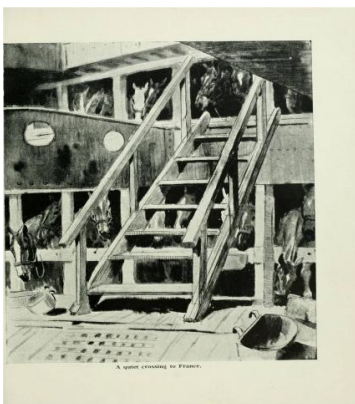


War Horse - Horse Auction

Photo from *The Horse and the War*, by Captain Sidney Galtrey, Illustrations from Drawings by Captain Lionel Edwards and from Photographs, [page 114](#).

Book - now in the public domain - was published at the offices of "Country Life," London, MCMXVIII (1918).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Horse-Auction>



War Horse - Horses Shipped to France

Photo from *The Horse and the War*, by Captain Sidney Galtrey, Illustrations from Drawings by Captain Lionel Edwards and from Photographs, [page 57](#).

Book - now in the public domain - was published at the offices of "Country Life," London, MCMXVIII (1918).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Horses-Shipped-to-France>



War Horse - French Horse Auction

Photo from the George Grantham Bain Collection, online courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

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<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-French-Horse-Auction>



War Horse - Joey and Tophorn

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War Horse - Pulling Heavy Artillery

Photo from the George Grantham Bain Collection, online courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Pulling-Heavy-Artillery>



War Horse - Stuck in Flanders Mud

Photo from *War of the Nations*, New York Times Co., New York, 1919 - online via [Photos of the Great War Gallery](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Stuck-in-Flanders-Mud>



War Horse - Carrying Austrian Ammo to Front Lines

Photo from *Der Volkerkrieg*, Vol. 4; Julius Hoffman, Stuttgart, 1914 - online via [Photos of the Great War Gallery](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Carrying-Austrian-Ammo-to-Front-Lines>



War Horse - Field Guns

Photo from the *New York Times*, May 16, 1915 - online via [Photos of the Great War Gallery](#).

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Field-Guns>



War Horse - Kaiser Wilhelm II at the Front

Photo from the George Grantham Bain Collection, online courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Kaiser-Wilhelm-II-at-the-Front>



War Horse - Tethered British Cavalry Horses

Photo from *War of the Nations*, New York Times Co., New York, 1919 - online via [Photos of the Great War Gallery](#).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Tethered-British-Cavalry-Horses>

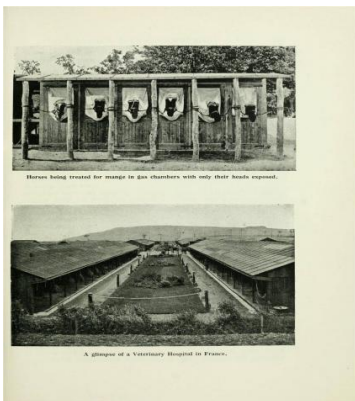


War Horse - Feeding Horses Near the Front

Photo from the George Grantham Bain Collection, online courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Feeding-Horses-Near-the-Front>



War Horse - Vet Hospital in France

Photo from *The Horse and the War*, by Captain Sidney Galtrey, Illustrations from Drawings by Captain Lionel Edwards and from Photographs, [page 91](#).

Book - now in the public domain - was published at the offices of "Country Life," London, MCMXVIII (1918).

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Vet-Hospital-in-France>



War Horse - Burials in Belgium

Photo from the George Grantham Bain Collection, online courtesy U.S. Library of Congress.

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/War-Horse-Burials-in-Belgium>

WILL YOU STAND FOR THIS?



INTO CAPTIVITY-A SCENE IN A BELGIAN TOWN.

HORSES in WORLD WAR I

View this asset at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/HORSES-in-WORLD-WAR-I-Illustration->