ARMY HOUNDS

The recent film War Horse told the story of a beloved farm horse fighting to survive on the battlefields of World War I. Less well known were the civilian dogs sent to war by their owners. And while Sighthounds were considered generally unsuitable for this work, a few did become ...

By Brian Patrick Duggan

Afghan Hound on guard duty with his U.S. Army Military Police handler during World War II.

British War Dogs

By the time the British Army caught on to the idea that dogs could have real military value in World War I, they were behind the times.

The Austrians, Dutch, Italians, French, Russians and Swedes had already been experimenting with dogs for pulling carts, a long-standing tradition in Europe. But it was the German Army that was the leading innovator in war dogs, employing dogs for army and ambulance work as early as the 1870s.

When the Great War began in 1914, the Germans already had 6,000 dogs in service – and were even quietly buying British dogs for this purpose – with a well-oiled mechanism for breeding and training. German dogs hauled carts with ammunition, supplies and wounded soldiers under the Red Cross emblem. Some were even trained to carry messages in battle.

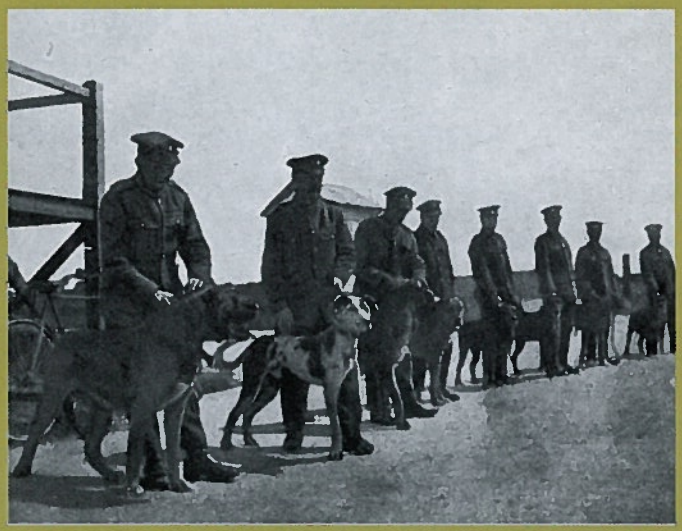
When the war was young, the British only used dogs wearing Red Cross coats with pockets of medical supplies to locate the wounded and unconscious. It was claimed that these dogs and their handlers were often shot by the Germans despite the prominent Red Cross badges, so this use subsided in favor of guard duty and messenger work. The war was two years old before the British Army acknowledged that dogs could assist the war effort with official jobs.

Needing a large number of dogs and horses (which pulled wagonloads of supplies and artillery) in short order, the British government appealed to the public to do "their bit" and loan their animals for the duration of the war.

All manner of purebreds and mutts were donated to the British War Dog School. Under the direction of Lt. Col. Edwin H. Richardson of the Royal Engineers, they were trained amid barbed wire, gas, smoke, gunshots and explosions. Richardson was a great "doggist" who had trained dogs for Red Cross work before the war, but could never get official sanction for his unconventional ideas. For training war dogs, Richardson tried to ensure that soldiers destined to be handlers were those who had had substantial experience with dogs in civilian life – such as gamekeepers, hunt servants and shepherds. He identified duties well suited for dogs: messenger, guard and sentry.

At first, the logical thought was that Sighthounds would be good messengers because of their speed, but they rapidly flunked the aptitude tests. At least, most of them did ...

After intensive study on how dogs adapted to Army duty, Richardson developed firm beliefs about the different breeds. A gay tail indicated "levity of character" and unsuitability for serious work. Foxhound-types lost interest in messenger work too quickly, and Greyhounds were judged as generally useless – in addition to being so tall as to become targets. In his opinion, the best messengers were Airedales, Irish and Welsh terriers, sheep dogs, lurchers (which are Sighthounds crossed with non-Sighthounds, often Collies or Terriers), certain Whippets and Scottish Deerhounds (some of which, Richardson said, "showed a great aptitude, but they are of course rather scarce").



Morning assembly of British guard dogs, including Irish Wolfhounds and Scottish Deerhounds, a Mastiff and Great Dane. *From "British War Dogs," 1920, Lt. Col. E.H. Richardson.*

British messenger dogs – including a Greyhound – at work during World War I. *Source: "British War Dogs," 1920, Lt. Col. E.H. Richardson.*

Because of their intimidating size, Irish Wolfhounds, Scottish Deerhounds and Great Danes (and for some reason, setters) were judged good for guarding ammunition and supply dumps and war factories, and for sentry duty. If a dog was not suited to be a messenger, then it might do well as a guard dog. Richardson believed that the Airedale was the perfect, all-round war dog, but his judgment of suitability was ultimately based on the individual dog's aptitude and character, rather than solely on breed type.

Messenger dogs had a metal tube fastened to their collar and each day might run four to six message trips in daylight, fog or darkness. They had to navigate muddy trenches, water-filled bomb craters, barbed wire, wrecked equipment, corpses and livestock – all while bullets and shrapnel whizzed about them. Rarely was there a straight or unobstructed path for messenger dogs in the trenches, so Sighthound speed was seldom fully utilized.

One of Richardson's handlers wrote about his dogs:

"The two are doing well, the Black Lurcher Bitch especially, she is splendid, takes no notice of the guns or anything; they have both been running regularly day and night this last fortnight from advanced H.Q., to the rear – they used to do it in about 7 or 8 minutes where it takes a man over half an hour."

In the 48-dog population of Messenger Dog Section No. 3 under Sgt. W. Bonney, dogs #143 & 145 were male Whippets named Skim and Forest, and their handler was Pioneer R. Windle. Lurchers by the names of Vulcan, Frolic, Lady, Roger, Slik, Sailor, Badger, Yellow and Sharp (who could cover a mile in under two minutes) were also in this group. Collies, Airedales, retrievers, terriers, setters and pointers, Dalmatians, and even Eskimo dogs were all used in Section No. 3, and Richardson records that two Greyhounds, one Whippet

Getting a message for delivery. *From "British War Dogs," 1920, Lt. Col. E.H. Richardson.*

and six Deerhounds were sent to France for messenger work during a particular period.

Acceptable Casualties

One source reported that the German Army had lost at least 7,000 dogs by the end of the World War I. Gassing, wounds and death were common, and if six dogs were sent out with messages, two survivors at the destination was considered an acceptable success rate by one general. While the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) devoted its efforts to the care of war horses, a sister organization, the Blue Cross, was founded to help this work and later expanded to take care of sick and wounded dogs. Eventually, each British horse hospital in France had a canine counterpart.

During the war, if a trained dog was judged to be "useless" by a commanding officer (who may or may not have understood dogs), it was given away or shot – despite the Army's tacit promise to return dogs to their owners. After the Armistice, trying to bring Army and pet dogs back to England through strict and expensive rabies quarantine was an almost insurmountable problem. Soldiers' hearts were torn at the thought of abandoning faithful companions who had stayed by their sides in battle and shared privation, victory and defeat.

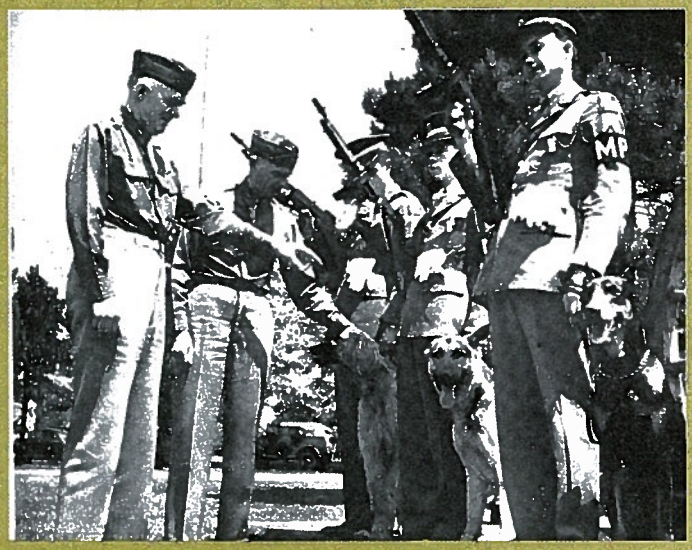
In a quandary between sympathy for their veterans and the very real fear of rabies, the British public cried out for a solution. Ads appeared in the press trumpeting that soldiers were compelled to leave dogs behind that had been often "cruelly treated by the enemy," and the abandonment of their faithful dogs was "A Tragedy of Peace." The RSPCA, Army Council and Board of Agriculture proposed a compromise, where they would pay the quarantine fees to repatriate dogs certified free of disease by British Army veterinarians in France. Citizens helped the RSPCA raise £20,000 (well over $4.6 million in today's dollars) for the Soldiers' Dogs' Fund to pay for the quarantine of any dog that a soldier wished to bring home.

Enlist Your Dogs

America entered the Great War in 1917 with no war dogs and no time to develop a training program, but they learned from the British and were somewhat better prepared by 1941. The generals had predicted the next war to be fully mechanized, with no important role for horses or dogs, but the British and American armies were again caught short for army dogs. Realizing there was still a great need for canine skills, they issued another plea for the loan of pet dogs for war duty.

The British Army commandeered the Greyhound Racing Kennels at Potters Bar outside London and established their Army War Dog School – and that seems to be about it for English Sighthound involvement in the war effort. Across the Atlantic, it was estimated that the Army, Navy and Coast Guard would need 300,000 dogs, and it was announced that a dog breeder's patriotic duty was not only to give dogs to the cause but also to *not* dump their culls on the military. Donated dogs could be purebred or cross-bred, but had to be at least 18 inches at the shoulder, not shy about storms or noises, and between one and five years old. Advertisements proclaimed that one dog could free six soldiers from sentry duty. The successful Dogs for Defense campaign brought in loaned dogs from all over the country for the K-9 Corps, but Sighthounds also appear to be absent from the American war machine – apart from one unusual instance.

In the November 1942 *AKC Gazette* (on inexpensive newsprint due to war shortages), an article on Dogs for Defense featured two photographs of an Afghan hound on guard duty with his U.S. Army Military Police handler. Artfully posed on an Army base are three M.P.s with machine guns, whistles and white gloves with their dogs – an Afghan Hound and the more usual German Shepherd and Doberman Pinscher. It seems likely that the Afghan was dutiful enough to represent the K-9 Corps, and may well have served out the war doing guard duty.



An unusual, if not unique, instance of an Afghan Hound in the U.S. Army K-9 Corps alongside the more usual German Shepherd and Doberman breeds.

Hunting Hounds

Despite the fact that Sighthounds were generally unfit for army duty because of their independence and intelligence (the very qualities admired in hunting dogs), there are many examples of them providing companionship, recreation and fresh game for soldiers in the field. Officers on service in British India kept Greyhounds, and one of them, Lt. Col. Hyde Cates, kept half a dozen lounging around his office when they were not out hunting. On the rough Punjab frontier, officers hunted jackal with both Foxhounds and Salukis.

During the second Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), it was common for British cavalry regiments to be accompanied by Greyhounds and

Lieutenant Mispelbaum and his Greyhound, Mespilus Aiolos, in northern France, five months before the Battle of the Somme, 1916. *Photo courtesy of Richard Hawkins.*

lurchers on the South African veldt. The hounds earned their place with the troopers by catching steenbok and springbok antelopes, and hare, to make welcome additions to the rations of tinned bully beef. Lt. Frederick Lance of the 19th Bengal Lancers was one of these officers who hunted with long dogs (Sighthound-to-Sighthound crosses) and Greyhounds in both South Africa and India. After World War I, he imported to England from Syria probably the most famous Saluki stud dog on record, Ch. Sarona Kelb.

In the comparatively quiet months before the Battle of the Somme in 1916, German Lieutenant Mispelbaum and his Greyhound, Mespilus Aiolos, hunted hare in northern France. The following year in the same region, the Leicestershire Yeomany's B squadron kept a fawn lurcher bitch, and she whelped a litter of puppies on campaign. In the Middle East, during the Arab Revolt, a few of Lawrence of Arabia's staff kept Salukis as pets. British officers, held prisoner in Turkey, were allowed to hold bi-weekly hunts with Salukis, and once used a hunt to cover a mass prison escape. After the Armistice in the Middle East, British Occupation forces in Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Syria and Iraq adopted the native Saluki for hunting hare, fox, jackal and gazelle, and organized hunt clubs and coursing meets became a regular pastime.

This tradition continued in World War II, when British cavalry officers serving with a Druze regiment in Syria adopted local Salukis for companionship and sport. Almost a half-century later, during the First Gulf War in 1990, Sgt. Phil Lemon of the 319th Field Artillery, 82nd Airborne, found an abandoned Saluki tied under a truck in Kuwait. "Dick" was recruited and made the unit's "Field Sanitation Non-Commissioned Officer," as he excelled at catching soldiers who had not stowed their garbage properly.

Major H. A. Waddington (flanked by two corporals) and his famous Saluki Hunt Pack in Al Kantara, Egypt in 1921.

Sgt. Phil Lemon and Dick "the Local Recruit" in Kuwait during the First Gulf War, 1990. Dick was brought back to the U.S. to live with Lemon and his family and eventually died of old age in Arizona. *Photo courtesy of Sgt. Phil Lemon.*

The Spirit of the Regiment

The idea of associating the qualities of Sighthounds (speed, strength and loyalty) with military units persists – if not in actual combat work then as mascots and symbols of *espirit de corps*.

Different from pets that individual soldiers, sailors and airmen acquire, official mascots embody some admirable characteristic, such as "Chesty," the tenacious Bulldog of the United States Marine Corps. Mascots may also be an exotic animal originally acquired on foreign service or a pet that survived a battle or campaign.

Privileged mascots belong to the entire regiment (or ship), have special soldiers entrusted with their care, and often have ceremonial duties. When old age necessitates retirement, the mascot is replaced by the same kind of animal, and may even inherit the same name.

In 2011, the British Army's Royal Irish Regiment (amalgamated from two venerable Irish regiments in 1992) selected Finn, its ninth Irish Wolfhound mascot, out of a litter of 10. Following tradition, young Finn will officially take the name "Brian Boru IX" when he assumes his official duties. Wolfhounds are popular mascot choices for units with Irish heritage, and the Royal Irish were not the first soldiers to choose one as a mascot.

Irish Wolfhounds

In 1900, Queen Victoria created the elite Irish Guards to honor the service and valor of Irish soldiers in the second Anglo-Boer War. The newly popular Irish Wolfhound breed had been revived by Capt. George Augustus Graham in the last half of the 19th Century, and after 20 years of experimental and selective breeding, he had produced a reasonably consistent version of what he believed the breed was like in the Middle Ages. What better pet could there be for the new Irish regiment than one of the symbols of Ireland's Celtic Revival?

A British Army recruiting poster distributed in Ireland in the early years of World War I. *Image courtesy of Dr. David Murphy.*

The Duchess of Cambridge presents shamrocks to the Irish Guards and and mascot on St. Patrick's Day 2012.

The Irish Wolfhound Club gave Rajah of Kidnal to the regiment in 1902, and his name was changed to Brian Boru. In 1961, the War Department finally authorized the Wolfhound as the official mascot of the Irish Guards, and as a mark of his status, he is entitled to free travel and medical care from the Royal Army Veterinary Corps – but not free food.

The regiment's current mascot is named Conmael, and this year he met the popular Duchess of Cambridge in a unique regimental ceremony, when each year on St. Patrick's Day a member of the Royal Family presents fresh shamrocks to the Irish Guards and their Irish Wolfhound.

The Irish Guard's Wolfhound mascot (rather a poor specimen) receiving a shamrock wreath between 1907 and 1914.

Other British regiments with Irish Wolfhound mascots during World War I include the Royal Munster Fusiliers and Queens Own Royal West Kent Regiment. The pre-war Dublin Regiment of the Irish Volunteers had a Wolfhound as a mascot, and during the war, the poster image of an Irish piper and his Irish Wolfhound encouraged enlistments in the British Army when Irish volunteers dropped off after the heavy casualties in France and Gallipoli, and the brutal crushing of the Easter Uprising in Dublin.

Beginning with the rebellion against the British Government on Easter Sunday 1916, patriotic calls on the Irish people to support the cause of their own sovereignty often invoked the traditional iconography of harp, shamrock, round tower and Irish Wolfhound. Today, the Defence Forces of Ireland have no official mascots, but in the past units of the DFI have had their regimental Wolfhounds.

In post-Civil War America, the Irish Brigade (consisting of the New York 63rd, 69th and 88th Infantry Regiments) erected a monument in 1888 to their Gettysburg dead in the form of a large Celtic cross with a bronze, recumbent Irish Wolfhound. From 1861, the Fighting 69th (also called "The Fighting Irish") had a brace of Irish Wolfhounds as supporters on their badge, and the association with the breed continues to this day in the New York Army National Guard 69th Infantry – whose current mascots are Benny and Jerry.

Chosen in 2011 as the next mascot of the Royal Irish Regiment, young Finn poses with the regimental headgear.

Scottish Deerhounds

For a few years during World War I, three Scottish Deerhounds had military functions. Bruce of Abbotsford, bred by Mrs. L. Armstrong, was the mascot for the 20th Battalion (1st Tyneside Scottish) Northumberland Fusiliers until the regiment was disbanded in 1918. Another Deerie named Ben Brisk belonged to the City of London Regiment, and one Ch. Osric,

Bruce of Abbotsford with officers of the Tyneside Scottish and probably Mrs. Armstrong (Abbotsford) early in World War I. *From Annette Pink's History of the U.K. Scottish Deerhound Club, 1986. Image courtesy of Richard Hawkins.*

Kolchack IV of the U.S. Wolfhound Group with his colonel and a master sergeant. In honor of their long history of charitable work with orphanages, they earned a new nickname – "The Gentle Wolfhounds."

draped in a Union Jack, was used to collect patriotic contributions from the British public. Ironically, no existing Scottish regiment has their native Deerhound as a mascot..

Borzoi

In addition to their Irish Wolfhound, the Royal West Kent Regiment had a young male Borzoi named Invicta after the regimental motto (Latin for "Invincible"). The parti-color hound paraded with the band in the early years of World War I and was said to have been presented to the regiment by Czar Nicholas II.

A little-known chapter of American military history reveals the 27th Infantry Regiment in Siberia during the post-October Revolution civil war from 1918 to 1920. They were fighting with remnants of the former White Russian Government against Red Bolshevik soldiers and partisans. In 1929 the regiment was presented with a white Russian Wolfhound ("Borzoi" not being commonly used until after 1935) named after Admiral Kolchak, who was said to have praised the 27th for having the endurance and tenacity of Wolfhounds during the harsh Siberian campaign.

The Russian Wolfhound became their mascot and is featured on their distinctive badge. Today, Kolchak XVI continues the mascot tradition, and the 27th is proudly known as "The Wolfhound Regiment" with the motto *Nec Aspera Terrent* – No Fear on Earth.

The unique Borzoi badge of the 27th United States Infantry – The Wolfhound Regiment.

Steel Sighthounds

Both the British and American armies acknowledged Sighthound power, speed and hunting prowess in a manner other than making them soldiers or mascots.

During World War I, the British designated a medium tank called the Mark A Whippet, capable of 8.4 mph (ironically, only a little faster than their "heavy" tanks). Twenty-five years later, Americans manufactured armored fighting vehicles that were supplied to the British forces during World War II. These were fast scout cars that had a cannon for "shoot and scoot" missions. The six-wheeled T17 was named Deerhound by the

The Staghound armored scout car used from World War II into the 1980s.

British, but was never adopted by them and used by the U.S. Military Police instead. A four-wheeled variation, the T17E1 Staghound, was used by the British in Europe. The U.S. Army used the M8 Greyhound (a lighter version of the Deerhound) as well as an even heavier cousin of the latter – the eight-wheeled, T18 Boarhound, but too late to see service in the war was the M38 Wolfhound. The British Staghound was used after World War II and into the 1980s in various world armies and defense forces.

Currently, the British army has a six-wheeled Tactical Support Vehicle called Wolfhound to supply combat troops with ammunition, rations and medical supplies; and the Ridgeback – a mine-protected armored vehicle.

Few military aircraft seem to be named after Sighthounds, and the preponderance of painted nose art shows Walt Disney's Pluto, USMC Bulldogs, and various cartoon dogs or wolves. An American B-17 bomber was named Wulf Hound by its crew, and, ironically, in 1942 it was captured after a forced landing and used by the Luftwaffe to train their fighter pilots in attack strategies.

The British company Armstrong Siddeley manufactured military aircraft engines named after powerful animals – including the Deerhound, Boarhound and Wolfhound. Currently, the American Grumman C-2A Greyhound is used for deployment of supplies and personnel to aircraft carriers.

In Vietnam, the 240th Assault Helicopter Company had Huey gun and transport ships with the respective call signs Mad Dog and Greyhound. The nose art of the former had a caricature long-nosed hound carrying Gatling guns, and while the transports featured the famous Greyhound bus logo on their choppers. While no military aircraft

line is named after dogs the way engines and vehicles were, there is the AGM-28 Hound Dog (attributed to the Elvis Presley song) – a supersonic, ballistic missile launched from B-52 Stratofortress bombers.

Speed on the ocean was always vital to commerce and nations, as witnessed by the nickname "Greyhounds of the Seas" – applied to both the extreme clipper ships of the 19th Century and naval destroyers of the 20th Century. Between 1545 and 1941, the British Navy had 16 fast ships named HMS Greyhound (the U.S. Navy had three ships of that name between 1822 to 1944). There was one HMS Wolfhound that served in both World Wars as a destroyer escort, and the short-lived HMS Whippet was christened in 1941 but sunk one month later by German aircraft. America had two USS Whippets - a patrol boat in WWI and a tanker in WWII. Currently the British Navy has Marine Auxiliary Service "Dog-class" berthing tugs named RMAS Elkhound and Deerhound – and plying the harbor waters of Devonport, a Naval Auxiliary Service craft named RNAS Saluki.

The Silver Greyhound badge of the U.S. Army's diplomatic messengers was used during World War I. *Author's collection.*

the throne in 1660, he decreed that the silver Greyhound be the emblem of the King's Messengers, and as a symbol of their speed and fidelity.

In recent years, though, with the advent of encrypted email and secure air freight, there is no longer a need for modern "Silver Greyhounds," who, much like James Bond, carried special passports, gold sovereigns and diplomatic pouches while accumulating some 250,000 air miles per year in first-class cabins. SR

This article is not meant to be comprehensive, and there are likely other instances of close military associations with Sighthounds. The author wishes to thank Richard Hawkins, John Ensminger, Hillary Jupp, Jay Kappmeier, Glen Locklear and Dr. David Murphy for their advice and contributions.

The King's Greyhound

This medal, a special diplomatic passport, and a ready supply of gold sovereigns permitted the King's Messengers to carry dispatches as fast as humanly possible and cross borders without hindrance.

While the hopeful notion of Greyhounds as messengers during the Great War was a wash-out, there were certain American soldiers in that war who wore dark blue arm badges with a white Greyhound at full gallop. They were special diplomatic couriers, and that badge gave them first priority in transport and freedom from bureaucratic delays at checkpoints and borders. The Americans had borrowed this messenger concept from the English, whose trusted royal couriers had a metal badge featuring the royal coat of arms and Order of the Garter ribbon with a pendant Greyhound.

These elite gentlemen were called The King's (or Queen's) Messengers and had served the monarch and government ministers since the time of Charles II, when, according to one romantic story, the exiled 17th Century king is said to have broken off four figures of coursing Greyhounds from the lid of a silver dish and given them to trusted men as a token that they acted as his personal couriers. When Charles regained

About the Author

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Pictured in Germany July 2012

World Dog Show, Vienna, Austria, April 2012, BEST BITCH, WORLD WINNER
Terni, Italy, May 2012, BREED AND BEST IN SHOW, *Mr. Michael Canalizo*
Donaueschingen, Germany, July 2012, BEST OF BREED, *Mr. Frank Sabella*
Eurosighthoundshow Poland September 2012, BEST IN SHOW *Mrs E Janzon breed and Mr G Jipping Best in Show*

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