

“For Gallantry We Also Serve. The DM Heroes”

By Alan Miles [\[email\]](#)

These special words were engraved on the Dicken Medal which was donated by the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals (PDSA).

This very special medal was presented to dogs, a cat, and a pigeon who served the Armed Forces in the defence of the realm, and some were mortally wounded. Here, and with thanks to author Jilly Cooper, I have chosen from her book "Animals at War", a mention of Rip, a mascot of ARP (Air Raid Personnel) at Poplar.

The ARP found Rip homeless and starving after an air raid in 1940. Rip the dog was recruited by them as they learned, he could sniff out casualties. He was awarded the Dicken medal along with other dogs; Jet, Irma, Peter, Thorn and Rex. .

All these dogs battled through blazing and collapsing buildings, choking with smoke quite often, and collapsing from the gas leaks. I think we have forgotten all about these animals.

At Woodford Bridge, there is still the cemetery where many DM heroes are buried. A few I'd like to name are ; Punch DM who served in Palestine, Mary DM, a pigeon who was mortally wounded in defence of the realm carrying messages, and Simon DM the cat from HMS Amethyst, of Yangtze River fame. Here, also lies Storm who starred in pre-war films and was buried without a fuss with no mourners, alongside Storm also laid his mother Irma DM. Lastly, there is Peter DM, he had an impressive record in finding air raid victims who had been buried alive in bombed buildings. If the victim was still alive the dog would lie down quietly on the spot, if the person was dead he would dig furiously into the rubble.

Today in Afghanistan, dogs serve and work with our troops until the very end. I have sadly learnt that if a soldier who was a dog-handler leaves the army, his dog has to be destroyed, and without a DM. Maybe this practice can be rectified, saving the lives of canine heroes.

Would people think as I do, that a wreath could be laid in memory of the dogs that served us in the war years, and currently, in the Middle East, at the cenotaph or Waltham Forest's own cenotaph and perhaps award them with a DM?

Bless them all the long the short and the tall

Alan Miles, Dec. 2013