

Memorial planned for dog accidentally shot in Wiltshire in WWI



The Army Ordnance Corp soldier was on patrol on Copheap when he accidentally shot the dog in 1917

A lost memorial to a dog accidentally shot by a soldier during World War One, could be reinstated in Wiltshire.

An iron cross, marking the dog's grave, was erected by a soldier from the Army Service Corps in Warminster in 1917.

The soldier, according to local historian Danny Howell, was so upset about what he had done he had wanted to give the animal a "fitting memorial".

The grave is no longer visible but to mark the war's centenary Mr Howell wants to find and reinstate it.

During WW1, two camps were set up in Warminster for newly enrolled troops training on nearby Salisbury Plain.

'Fired without thinking'

The Army Ordnance Corp (AOC) was one of the units posted there and it was an AOC soldier, according to Mr Howell, who accidentally shot the dog.

"He was on patrol on Copheap in 1917 and probably heard a rustle and fired without thinking," said Mr Howell.

"But he was so upset, he decided to give the dog a proper memorial."

Buried where it had been shot on Copheap, the animal's grave was marked with a small area of concrete and an iron cross.

But in the mid 1980s the cross was vandalised by youths and over the next decade the memorial was lost under dense undergrowth.

"The last time I saw the grave in something of its original glory was in the early 1980s," said Mr Howell.

"Since then soil has slipped down the slope of the hill and covered the concrete slab.

"But I can remember roughly where the grave is, so we won't need to scour the whole hill looking for the exact spot."

'Remembers little people'

With the use of a metal detector, to locate what is left of the iron cross, Mr Howell is hoping to resurrect the landmark in time for next year's 100th anniversary of the start of WW1.

"The loss of a dog's life during the war may seem irrelevant to some and compared with the loss of millions of people's lives in the war it is," he said.

"But we are a nation and town of dog lovers and I think that this project remembers the 'little people' whose lives were cut short."

Copheap is the responsibility of Warminster Town Council. It was bought for the town in 1947 and the whole area was dedicated as a war memorial three years later.

Heather Abernethie, from the town council, said members had been "intrigued by the request" to reinstate the dog's grave.

"I'd never, ever heard of it [the memorial] before so we need to find some provenance," she said.

"But I am intrigued to find out more and in principal everybody is up for it and I am sure it will get supported."

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