

Wojtek Soldier Bear

Wojtek was a brown bear. He was sold as a cub to some Polish soldiers who were travelling from Siberia to the Middle East, after being released from labour camps in Russia in 1941. It is thought the cub's mother had been shot by hunters.

Wojtek was so small when the soldiers bought him, he was like a small dog. They fed him condensed milk from a bottle. The soldiers became Wojtek's new family.

Wojtek was adopted by the 22nd Transport Company, Artillery Division of the Polish 2nd Corps and mostly spent time with the men from the 4th Platoon.

As a cub, Wojtek could easily ride in the cab of any vehicle but as he grew he would sit in the back with the supplies. Often, he would ride on one of the recovery trucks, where he could lie down during the long journeys or play by climbing up the recovery truck crane.

As he grew, Wojtek could often be found in the kitchen area wherever the men were camped and would eat everything he was fed. He even liked beer, wine and cigarettes (which he would eat!).

Wojtek was a peaceful bear and posed no danger to humans. He was taught to salute when greeted. He liked play fighting and boxing; those brave enough to wrestle with him could end up scratched or with a torn uniform! Wojtek helped keep up the troops' morale; like a pet, he was an important focus for the men far from home.

Animals were not normally allowed to accompany troops when they were fighting so when the company prepared to go to war in Italy in 1943, they officially enlisted Wojtek as a Polish soldier with his own rank and serial number. During the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy, Wojtek found himself at the artillery firing line. Always curious and willing to copy what others were doing, the 1.82m tall bear began picking up the crates and moving them towards the cannons. The noise did not scare him and he showed courage in his willingness to help. After the battle, the official badge of the 22nd Transport Company became an image of Wojtek holding a shell. This symbol appeared on vehicles, pennants and on the uniforms of the soldiers.

When the war ended in 1945, the Polish soldiers were sent to a camp on the Scottish Borders where the company were demobbed. In December 1947, Wojtek

went to live in Edinburgh Zoo where Polish ex-servicemen would visit him.

Wojtek died in 1963 at the age of 21. His death was reported in the media and his story is remembered in memorials and statues around the world, examples of which can be found in England, Canada and Poland.

A bronze statue of Wojtek stands in the Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens; created by the sculptor Alan Beattie Herriot, it was unveiled on 7th November 2015 and represents Wojtek and a Polish Army Soldier walking in peace and unity. They stand in front of a 4m long relief plaque that shows his journey from Egypt to Scotland alongside the Polish Army. The statue is also in memory of the Polish veterans of the Second World War, and the many men, women and children who became refugees because of the war. Many Poles settled in Scotland after the war and the younger generation have made Scotland their home in more recent years. Wojtek's story began 70 years of post-war Polish Scottish relations.

In December 2011, a film, Wojtek – The Bear That Went to War, was broadcast by the BBC in Scotland.

Wojtek is part of the history of the Polish Armed Forces and of the Second World War.



Questions

1. What kind of bear was Wojtek?

2. What did the soldiers feed Wojtek when he was little?

3. How would Wojtek travel?

4. Why did men have to be brave to wrestle with Wojtek?

5. What did Wojtek do to help at the Battle of Monte Cassino?

6. Where did Wojtek go after the war?

7. What happened to Wojtek?

8. Which countries have statues in memory of Wojtek?

9. Where in Edinburgh does Wojtek's statue stand?

10. Who else in the statue also in memory of?

Answers

1. What kind of bear was Wojtek?
Wojtek was a brown bear.
2. What did the soldiers feed Wojtek when he was little?
They fed him condensed milk from a bottle.
3. How would Wojtek travel?
As a cub, Wojtek could easily ride in the cab of any vehicle but as he grew he would sit in the back with the supplies.
4. Why did men have to be brave to wrestle with Wojtek?
They had to be brave because he was a bear and they could end up scratched by his claws on with a torn uniform.
5. What did Wojtek do to help at the Battle of Monte Cassino?
Wojtek picked up crates of ammunition and moved them towards the cannons.
6. Where did Wojtek go after the war?
When the war ended in 1945, Wojtek was sent to a camp on the Scottish Borders where the company were demobbed. In December 1947, Wojtek went to live in Edinburgh.
7. What happened to Wojtek?
Wojtek died in 1963 at the age of 21.
8. Which countries have statues in memory of Wojtek?
England, Canada, Poland and Scotland all have statues of Wojtek.
9. Where in Edinburgh does Wojtek's statue stand?
Wojtek's statue can be found in Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh.
10. Who else in the statue also in memory of?
The statue is also in memory of the Polish veterans of the Second World War, and the many men, women and children who became refugees because of the war.

Wojtek Soldier Bear

Wojtek (pronounced Voytek) was a Syrian brown bear. He was sold as a cub to some Polish soldiers who were travelling from Siberia to the Middle East, after being released from labour camps in Russia in 1941. The soldiers were on their way to become part of a new Polish army under the command of the British. It is thought the cub's mother had been shot by hunters.

The name Wojtek comes from an old Polish name that means joyful warrior. Wojtek was so small when the soldiers bought him, he was like a small dog. They fed him condensed milk from a bottle. A bond was formed between the bear and the soldiers and they became his new family.

Wojtek was adopted by the 22nd Transport Company, Artillery Division of the Polish 2nd Corps and mostly spent time with the men from the 4th Platoon. Two young soldiers became his closest friends, Dymitr Szawlugo and Henryk Zacharewicz both appear in many of the photos and film footage taken of Wojtek.

As a cub, Wojtek could easily ride in the cab of any vehicle but as he grew he would sit in the back with the supplies. Often, he would ride on one of the recovery trucks, where he could lie down during the long journeys or play by climbing up the recovery truck crane.

As he grew, Wojtek could often be found in the kitchen area and would eat everything he was fed. He even liked beer, wine and cigarettes (which he would eat!)

Wojtek was a peaceful bear and posed no danger to humans. He was taught to salute when greeted. He liked play fighting and boxing; those brave enough to wrestle with him could end up scratched or with a torn uniform! Once Wojtek captured a thief who had broken into an ammunition compound where the bear was sleeping. The thief was so shocked to find himself face to face with a bear that the noise he made alerted the troops and he was arrested. Wojtek was rewarded with a bottle of beer. Wojtek helped keep up the troops' morale; like a pet, he was an important focus for the men far from home.

Animals were not normally allowed to accompany troops when they were fighting so when the company prepared to go to war in Italy in 1943, they officially enlisted Wojtek as a Polish soldier with his own rank and serial number. During the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy, Wojtek found himself at the artillery firing line. Henryk was to take care of the bear but when he was

ordered forward, Wojtek was left alone. Always curious and willing to copy what others were doing, the 1.82m tall bear began picking up the crates and moving them towards the cannons. The noise did not scare him and he showed courage in his willingness to help out. After the battle, the official badge of the 22nd Transport Company became an image of Wojtek holding a shell. This symbol appeared on vehicles, pennants and on the uniforms of the soldiers.

When the war ended in 1945, the Polish soldiers were sent to a camp on the Scottish Borders where the company were demobbed. In December 1947, Wojtek went to live in Edinburgh Zoo where Polish ex-servicemen would visit him.

Wojtek died in 1963 at the age of 21. His death was reported in the media and his story is remembered in memorials and statues around the world, examples of which can be found in England, Canada and Poland.

A bronze statue of Wojtek stands in the Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens; created by the sculptor Alan Beattie Herriot, it was unveiled on 7th November 2015 and represents Wojtek and a Polish Army Soldier walking in peace and unity. They stand in front of a 4m long relief plaque that shows his journey from Egypt to Scotland alongside the Polish Army. The statue is also in memory of the Polish veterans of the Second World War, and the many men, women and children who became refugees because of the war and its aftermath. Many Poles settled in Scotland after the war and the younger generation have made Scotland their home in more recent years. Wojtek's story begins 70 years of post-war Polish Scottish relations.

In December 2011, a film, Wojtek – The Bear That Went to War, was broadcast by the BBC in Scotland.

Wojtek is part of the history of the Polish Armed Forces and of the Second World War.



Questions

1. Why was Wojtek owned by Polish soldiers?

2. Why were the soldiers travelling from Siberia to the Middle East?

3. Why did the soldiers have to feed Wojtek from a bottle?

4. Why was Wojtek important for the troops' morale?

5. Why was the thief shocked to find himself face to face with a bear?

6. How did the company avoid breaking the rules about taking animals with them into war?

7. How did Wojtek help out at the Battle of Monte Cassino?

8. How were Wojtek's actions marked after the battle?

9. Which countries have statues in memory of Wojtek?

10. What does Wojtek's statue in Edinburgh represent?

Answers

1. Why was Wojtek owned by Polish soldiers?
He was sold as a cub to the Polish soldiers.
2. Why were the soldiers travelling from Siberia to the Middle East?
They had been released from labour camps in Russia in 1941 and were on their way to become part of a new Polish army under the command of the British.
3. Why did the soldiers have to feed Wojtek from a bottle?
They had to feed him from a bottle because he was so small.
4. Why was Wojtek important for the troops' morale?
OPEN He was important because he was like a pet and gave them something to think about, play with and care for when they were far from home.
5. Why was the thief shocked to find himself face to face with a bear?
OPEN He would not have expected it and would have thought he was going to be attacked.
6. How did the company avoid breaking the rules about taking animals with them into war?
They officially enlisted Wojtek as a Polish soldier with his own rank and serial number.
7. How did Wojtek help out at the Battle of Monte Cassino?
He was seen picking up the crates of ammunition and moving them towards the cannons.
8. How were Wojtek's actions marked after the battle?
After the battle, the official badge of the 22nd Transport Company became an image of Wojtek holding a shell. This symbol appeared on vehicles, pennants and on the uniforms of the soldiers.
9. Which countries have statues in memory of Wojtek?
England, Canada, Poland and Scotland all have statues of Wojtek.
10. What does Wojtek's statue in Edinburgh represent?
It represents Wojtek and what happened to him and it also is in memory of the Polish veterans of the Second World War, and the many men, women and children who became refugees because of the war and its aftermath.

Wojtek Soldier Bear

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Wojtek attracted lots of attention wherever he went and he loved to entertain people. One summer's day when the soldiers were driving on Italy's Adriatic coast, Wojtek spotted the sea and jumped out onto the beach; leaving the soldiers to reassure the bathers that this was a friendly bear! Wojtek helped keep up the troops' morale; like a pet he was an important focus for the men far from home.

Animals were not normally allowed to accompany troops when they were

fighting and as the company prepared to enter the war zone in Italy in 1943, they wondered what they would do with Wojtek. He had to be officially enlisted in order to travel, so Wojtek was made a Polish soldier with his own rank and serial number (although he was unpaid). During the Battle of Monte Cassino in Italy, Wojtek found himself at the artillery firing line where he was seen to move crates of ammunition. Henryk was to take care of the bear but when he was ordered forward, he had to leave Wojtek alone. Always curious and willing to copy what others were doing, the 1.82m tall bear began picking up the crates and moving them towards the cannons. The noise did not scare him and he showed courage in his willingness to participate in the action. After the battle, the official badge of the 22nd Transport Company became an image of Wojtek holding a shell. This symbol appeared on vehicles, pennants and on the uniforms of the soldiers.

When the war ended in 1945, the Polish soldiers were sent to a camp near Hutton on the Scottish Borders where the company were demobbed. In December 1947, Wojtek went to live in Edinburgh Zoo where Polish ex-servicemen would visit him.

Wojtek died in 1963 at the age of 21. His death was reported in the media and his story is remembered in memorials and statues around the world.

There is a plaque in Wojtek's memory at the Imperial War Museum in London and in the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa.

A sculpture of the bear exists in the Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum in London. A wooden sculpture of the bear carrying a shell can be seen in Grimsby representing the mascot of a company of Polish soldiers who camped there after the Second World War.

A statue was erected in Krakow, Poland and unveiled in 2014, on the 70th anniversary of the Battle of Monte Cassino.

A bronze statue of Wojtek stands in the Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens; created by the sculptor Alan Beattie Herriot, it was unveiled on 7th November 2015 and represents Wojtek and a Polish Army Soldier walking in peace and unity. They stand in front of a 4m long relief plaque that documents his journey from Egypt to Scotland alongside the Polish Army. The statue is also in memory of the Polish veterans of the Second World War, and the many men, women

and children who became refugees because of the war and its aftermath. Many Poles settled in Scotland after the war and the younger generation have made Scotland their home in more recent years. Wojtek's story begins 70 years of post-war Polish Scottish relations.

A new statue was gifted to the people of Duns (near Hutton where Wojtek lived for a while) by its twin town of Zagan in Poland. It was unveiled on 24th April 2016 in the town's market square.

In December 2011, a film, Wojtek – The Bear That Went to War, was broadcast by the BBC in Scotland.

Wojtek is part of the history of the Polish Armed Forces and of the Second World War.



Questions

1. What circumstances led to Wojtek being owned by the Polish soldiers?

2. How did the soldiers care for Wojtek as a cub?

3. Wojtek was important for keeping up the soldiers' morale. How did he do this?

4. What circumstances led to Wojtek being made a Polish soldier?

5. What did Wojtek do during the battle of Monte Cassino and why was this unusual for an animal?

6. How were his actions marked after the battle and why do you think this was done?

7. In December 1947, Wojtek went to live in Edinburgh Zoo. Do you think this was a suitable place for the bear to go? Can you suggest alternative places he could have gone to live in?
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8. When Wojtek died, his death was reported in the media and he is remembered in statues and plaques across the world. Why do you think was Wojtek so important?
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9. Why is the statue in Edinburgh of Wojtek and the Polish soldier significant in Polish and Scottish history?
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10. How else has Wojtek been remembered?
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Answers

1. What circumstances led to Wojtek being owned by the Polish soldiers?
Wojtek was sold as a cub to some Polish soldiers who were travelling from Siberia to the Middle East, after being released from labour camps in Russia in 1941. The soldiers were on their way to become part of a new Polish army under the command of the British. It is thought the cub's mother had been shot by hunters.
2. How did the soldiers care for Wojtek as a cub?
They fed him condensed milk from a bottle.
3. Wojtek was important for keeping up the soldiers' morale. How did he do this?
OPEN Wojtek was something they could care for and focus on like a pet. He entertained them with wrestling and boxing. He was a friendly bear.
4. What circumstances led to Wojtek being made a Polish soldier?
Animals were not normally allowed to accompany troops when they were fighting so, in order to accompany the troops as they prepared to enter the war zone in Italy in 1943, he had to be officially enlisted in order to travel. Wojtek was made a Polish soldier with his own rank and serial number (although he was unpaid).
5. What did Wojtek do during the battle of Monte Cassino and why was this unusual for an animal?
Always curious and willing to copy what others were doing, during the battle, the 1.82m tall bear began picking up the crates and moving them towards the cannons. This was unusual for an animal because the noise did not scare him and he showed courage in his willingness to participate in the action.
6. How were his actions marked after the battle and why do you think this was done?
After the battle, the official badge of the 22nd Transport Company became an image of Wojtek holding a shell. This symbol appeared on vehicles, pennants and on the uniforms of the soldiers. OPEN perhaps this was done because the company were so proud of their brave and courageous bear.
7. In December 1947, Wojtek went to live in Edinburgh Zoo. Do you think this was a suitable place for the bear to go? Can you suggest alternative places he could have gone to live in?
OPEN
8. When Wojtek died, his death was reported in the media and he is remembered in statues and plaques across the world. Why do you think was Wojtek so important?
OPEN
9. Why is the statue in Edinburgh of Wojtek and the Polish soldier significant in Polish and Scottish history?
It is significant because the statue is also in memory of the Polish veterans of the

Second World War, and the many men, women and children who became refugees because of the war and its aftermath. Many Poles settled in Scotland after the war and the younger generation have made Scotland their home in more recent years. Wojtek's story begins 70 years of post-war Polish Scottish relations.

10. How else has Wojtek been remembered?

Wojtek has been remembered in a film; Wojtek – The Bear That Went to War, was broadcast by the BBC in Scotland in December 2011.