

# Wojtek

By Willoughby Larder

Have you ever thought about any famous soldiers or veterans that served in war? I have too, but today I am going to change the topic and talk about an incredible war animal named Wojtek. Wojtek was a war bear that served in WWII and helped many people.

Wojtek was a Persian bear cub when he was adopted by a unit of Polish soldiers in the British army in the Middle East during WWII. Wojtek was raised learning how to be a soldier and helping people fight in the war by the 22nd Transport Company Artillery Division. Wojtek was treated like one of the soldiers themselves and he fit in quite well. You would not think so, but some of Wojtek's favourite activities were drinking beer, taking showers and wrestling! The unit was soon deployed to Europe and none of the soldiers wanted to say goodbye to Wojtek, so they made him an official soldier and brought him along with them. Wojtek became Corporal Wojtek of the artillery supply unit, and that job very well suited him.

A little while later, Wojtek was put to the test when the battle of Monte Cassino came. Wojtek had to load 100-pound boxes of artillery shells onto a truck for the soldiers. He needed to do this all day, every day, until the battle was won. Wojtek was so tired, but it wasn't for nothing; after that battle, the army honoured him by making the unit's official picture on their badge a picture of Wojtek carrying ammo! After that battle, Wojtek lived out the rest of his life in the Edinburgh Zoo until he died at age twenty-one in 1963.

Thank you for listening to this special story about Wojtek. I hope that you have learned more about him and who he was!