

Animals in War Memorial 2025

There was good attendance again this year at the Remembrance Sunday Service at the Animals in War Memorial in Park Lane, London. The service is faith-based and conducted by the Revd Samantha Chandler.



Dr Nellist with Revd Samantha Chandler

Our Pan-Orthodox Concern for Animals President, Dr Christina Nellist, attended and laid two wreathes, one from POCA and the other for the Animal Interfaith Alliance, of which she is a Trustee.

The keynote speaker this year was Drew Tootal, BSc BVSc MSc(Res) MRCVS. Our President spoke with Dr Tootal and asked permission to publish his speech on our website, and we present it here.

Remembrance Sunday Speech – Animals in War Memorial

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you for gathering here today at the Animals in War Memorial—a place of quiet reflection, remembrance, and gratitude. It is a privilege to speak to you, not only as a civilian veterinary surgeon, but as someone who once served as a military veterinary officer.

On this solemn day, as we honour the human lives lost in conflict—those who made the ultimate sacrifice for our safety and freedoms—we also pause here to remember another group of comrades. Not to elevate them above the brave men and women we rightly honour across the country, but simply to acknowledge them—as companions in service, as silent partners in war, and as lives also given in the line of duty.

For centuries, animals have stood beside soldiers on battlefields across the world. They have carried, pulled, tracked, guarded, searched, comforted, and, often, died.

Horses, mules, and donkeys bore unimaginable loads through mud, snow, and shellfire. Dogs served as messengers, sentries, and life-saving detectors of mines and explosives. Pigeons delivered vital communications when all other systems had failed. Even elephants, camels, and canaries had their roles to play. None of them chose to serve. But all of them did so with quiet, unknowing bravery.

During the First World War alone, millions of horses and mules were used—many never returned. In later conflicts, dogs were parachuted into occupied territories, pigeons awarded medals for carrying messages that saved lives, and animals continued to serve, often unnoticed, but always essential.

As someone who has worked with military animals, I can attest to the bond between soldier and animal. It is a partnership built not on words, but on trust, loyalty, and courage. I have seen it in the eyes of handlers, and I have seen it in the steady resilience of the animals they work with. They are not mascots. They are not machines. They are comrades.

But let me be clear: in honouring these animals, we do not for a moment diminish the sacrifice of human lives. This is not about competition in grief, or hierarchy in loss. Human life must always take precedence in the values we hold. But today, we simply open a space—alongside the names etched in stone and the memories held in our hearts—to remember the animals who served, and those who did not return.

They did not volunteer. They did not understand the cause. And yet, they gave their strength, their skills, and, in many cases, their lives. It is right that we acknowledge them.

Today, in silence and reflection, we remember their courage. We honour their service. And we commit ourselves to ensuring that, though they had no voice in life, they are not forgotten in death.

Let this memorial, and our presence here, stand as a quiet promise: that those who stood beside us—no matter how many legs they had—will be remembered with the dignity they deserve.

Thank you.



Dr Drew Tootal giving his speech Nov 9th, 2025



After the service our President struck up conversation with the women seen standing with the horse. She is Rosemary Steed who had travelled down from Glasgow as she had been invited to attend the Remembrance Sunday Service at the Cenotaph this year. Rosemary is seen wearing the medals of her Father and Grandfather who both served in the Royal Artillery. She had seen the Animals in War Memorial on her way to the Cenotaph and decided to come back for a better look, just at the time for the service. She was delighted to have her photograph taken and gave permission for it and her story to be published here. As we often say - there are no coincidences with God!

The service is organised each year by the Anglican Society for the Welfare of Animals. It consists of a brief introduction and welcome by Revd Samantha, followed by hymns, a Gospel Reading, other Readings and Poems, Intercessions, a Two Minute Silence, the laying of wreaths, and ends with the Blessing and final hymn.

Do mark it on your calendar for next year, and we hope to see you there.

With love in Christ,

Dr Christina