



ROB: THE DOG WHO JOINED THE SAS

The Battle of Tunisia, Second World War, North Africa, 1943

Rob the collie was one of the army's first paratrogs and he made more than twenty parachute jumps during his time with the Special Forces. Most famously, he was dropped deep into enemy territory when British, American and Canadian paratroopers were fighting hard to regain control of Italy and North Africa.

It must have been an extraordinary adventure for the dog who grew up on a cattle farm in rural Shropshire. Mostly black, with white legs and a distinctive patch on his face, Rob was about four years old when his family decided to volunteer him for war work.

Most dogs of this sort were set to work guarding military bases in Britain, but soon after joining the army Rob was shipped out to North Africa to guard prisoners of war in a desert camp.

Fortunately Rob didn't mind the ferocious heat. Clearly a bright dog, he learned how to perform new tasks very quickly. Because he seemed unusually intelligent, a soldier called Quartermaster Major Burt began to wonder if he wasn't wasted doing simple guard duties. Like the men in the Special Air Service, thought Burt, Rob appeared to have special talents. He seemed like the sort of resourceful animal who could put stealth, silence and strength to good purpose, working with those soldiers who were sent into the enemy's territory to blow up military facilities and disrupt their plans.

To test this theory QM Burt is thought to have smuggled Rob onto an aeroplane one night to see how he reacted to the noise and motion of flying. Rob turned out to be quite happy with this, so QM Burt tried again and on a second flight fitted the dog with a borrowed parachute harness so the two of them could jump out of the plane!

Once again Rob appeared to be completely unfazed by the experience, and actually seemed to enjoy it. Convinced he was on to something, his new master asked his commanding officer for permission to carry on with

