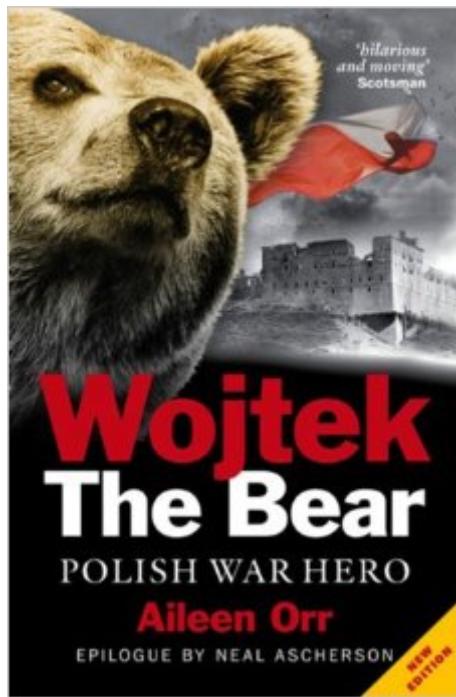


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# Wojtek The Bear: Polish War Hero



## Synopsis

This is the inspiring and charming true story of one of the Second World War's most unusual combatants – a 500-pound cigarette smoking, beer-drinking brown bear. Originally adopted as a mascot by the Polish Army in Iran, Wojtek soon took on a more practical role, carrying heavy mortar rounds for the troops and going on to play his part as a fully enlisted 'soldier' with his own rank and number during the Italian campaign. After the war, Wojtek, along with some of his Polish compatriots from II Corps, came to Berwickshire, where he became a significant member of the local community before subsequently moving to Edinburgh Zoo. Wojtek's retirement was far from quiet: a potent symbol of freedom and solidarity for Poles around the world, he attracted a huge amount of media interest that shows no sign of abating almost 50 years after his death.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The story of Wojtek, a brown bear adopted as an orphaned cub by Polish soldiers is well-known in some quarters, notably in Britain and among Polish veterans of World War II. However, his story may not be so well known elsewhere. Aileen Orr's new biography "Wojtek the Bear, Polish War Hero" will help to remedy that. Orr grew up in post-World War II in the Borders area of Scotland on a farm near to a Polish troop demobilization center. It was there in the period immediately after World War II that her grandfather came to know and love Wojtek, a brown bear who served and was given a rank in the Polish Second Army. By the time Orr was a young girl, Wojtek had become a resident of the Edinburgh Zoo. This is where Orr would go to visit Wojtek. Wojtek lived until the age of 22. He died at the Zoo in 1963. The saga of Wojtek (pronounced Voy-check) begins with his adoption in

1942 by Polish troops stationed in Iran. His socialization was as a member of a platoon of men, not as a wild bear as he would otherwise have been, gathering and hunting for food, wary of men. What is fascinating is that Wojtek probably considered himself as much a human as a bear since from an impressionable age he had no mama bear to teach him. Instead, he modeled himself as a soldier, following the lead of the soldiers as they did their daily duties and practiced their field maneuvers. For more than five years, Wojtek lived freely with the Polish soldiers, modeling his behavior on theirs, wrestling with them, rough-housing and playing games with them, eating as they ate. A mascot and morale-booster, Wojtek was this and much more. The Polish Second (Artillery) Corps moved many times from Iran to Iraq, to Palestine, to Egypt, Italy and finally, to Scotland. As the Army moved, so did Wojtek.

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