

## Background

In 2012, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador passed its new *Animal Health and Protection Act* to recognize increased public concern over the legal protections necessary for domestic animals in our society.

As laws are a tool to correct inappropriate care of animals, it was considered important to also publicly recognize acts of kindness towards animals, or acts of bravery by animals towards people.

The idea of an Animal Hero Award originally came from the story of the wreck of the *S.S. Ethie* off the west coast of the Island of Newfoundland in 1919. The story described a dog helping to save the shipwrecked passengers and crew, and the public reaction to this hero dog. This included the creation and awarding of an Animal Hero collar by the citizens of Philadelphia to the owners of the dog in question, and discussion by this province's SPCA of the creation of an animal hero medal to give to the owner.

However, with time, the story came into question with little first-hand confirmation that a dog actually was involved in this event.

It was then decided to create an award that did recognize true events or at least those accepted into the mythology of Newfoundland culture, the wreck of the *Despatch* off of Isle aux Morts (1828), and the saving of the horse *Kit* from Tickle Cove Pond.

## The Wreck of the *Despatch*

In 1828, the Irish immigrant vessel *Despatch* hit rocks off of Isle aux Morts resulting in the loss of the ship and many of its passengers and crew. However, due to the courage of the Harvey family and their Newfoundland Dog, *Hairyman*, 163 passengers and crew were saved.

Seventeen year old Ann Harvey, her 10 year old brother Tom and their father George are remembered as the primary family members involved in the rescue.

Ann was named the "Grace Darling of Newfoundland", a recognition bestowed by the British Empire to a member of each of its colonies and in memory of a young English woman, Grace Darling, who was involved in a similar rescue event in England.

This story has resulted in the writing of a novel "Ann and Seamus" (Kevin Major) and an opera of the same name by the Newfoundland choral group Shallaway and composer Stephen Hatfield.

The federal government has appropriately named a search and rescue vessel the *CCGS Ann Harvey*.

It is also a source of pride for the local community and a focus for the Isle aux Morts Heritage Society.

This story and the engraving on one side of the medal then represents acts of bravery by animals towards people.



Isle aux Morts  
Heritage Society

## Tickle Cove Pond

Fisherman and songwriter, Mark Walker, wrote this song in the late 1800s about an event that may or may not have occurred on Tickle Cove Pond, near the community of Tickle Cove in Bonavista South.

If this event did not actually occur, it was likely the experience of a number of similar events that inspired him to write this song.

While hauling wood across a frozen pond in early spring, the ice gives way and into the water falls the mare *Kit* and her owner. By calling out to nearby neighbours, the owner and horse were successfully saved as described in the song's final chorus:

*Lay hold William Over, Lay hold William White,  
Lay hold of the cordage and pull all your might.  
Lay hold of the bowline and pull all you can  
And with that we brought Kit out of Tickle Cove  
Pond.*

Though wording varies between versions, this is the generally accepted one and shows an act of compassion by people towards an animal in distress. This image and words from this chorus are engraved on one side of the medal.

This event is remembered in the community of Tickle Cove and the nearby King's Cove Historical Society.



King's Cove  
HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## The Award

The award consists of a 10 cm engraved medal that shows *Hairyman* assisting in the rescue of the passengers and crew of the *Despatch*, and on the opposite side the saving of the mare *Kit* by William Over and William White.



In cooperation with the Newfoundland and Labrador Veterinary Medical Association, and the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (Newfoundland and Labrador), one award will be given out each year to an individual or organization that has shown an outstanding act of compassion towards an animal or animals. It could also be given out to the owner of an animal that has displayed an act of heroism towards people.

The names will come from public solicitation and the winner will be chosen by a consensus of the three groups involved (provincial government, NALVMA and SPCA-NL). No members of these three groups are eligible to win when acting in the capacity of their official affiliation.

The award will be mounted in a wooden frame and engraved with the name and particulars of the event for that year. In the first year (2015), awards will be given to the local heritage or historical societies most closely associated with the events.

Creative design by Vivid Communications (St. John's).



Publication: AW 15-001  
Last Revised: September 2015

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## Animal Hero Award



Newfoundland  
Labrador