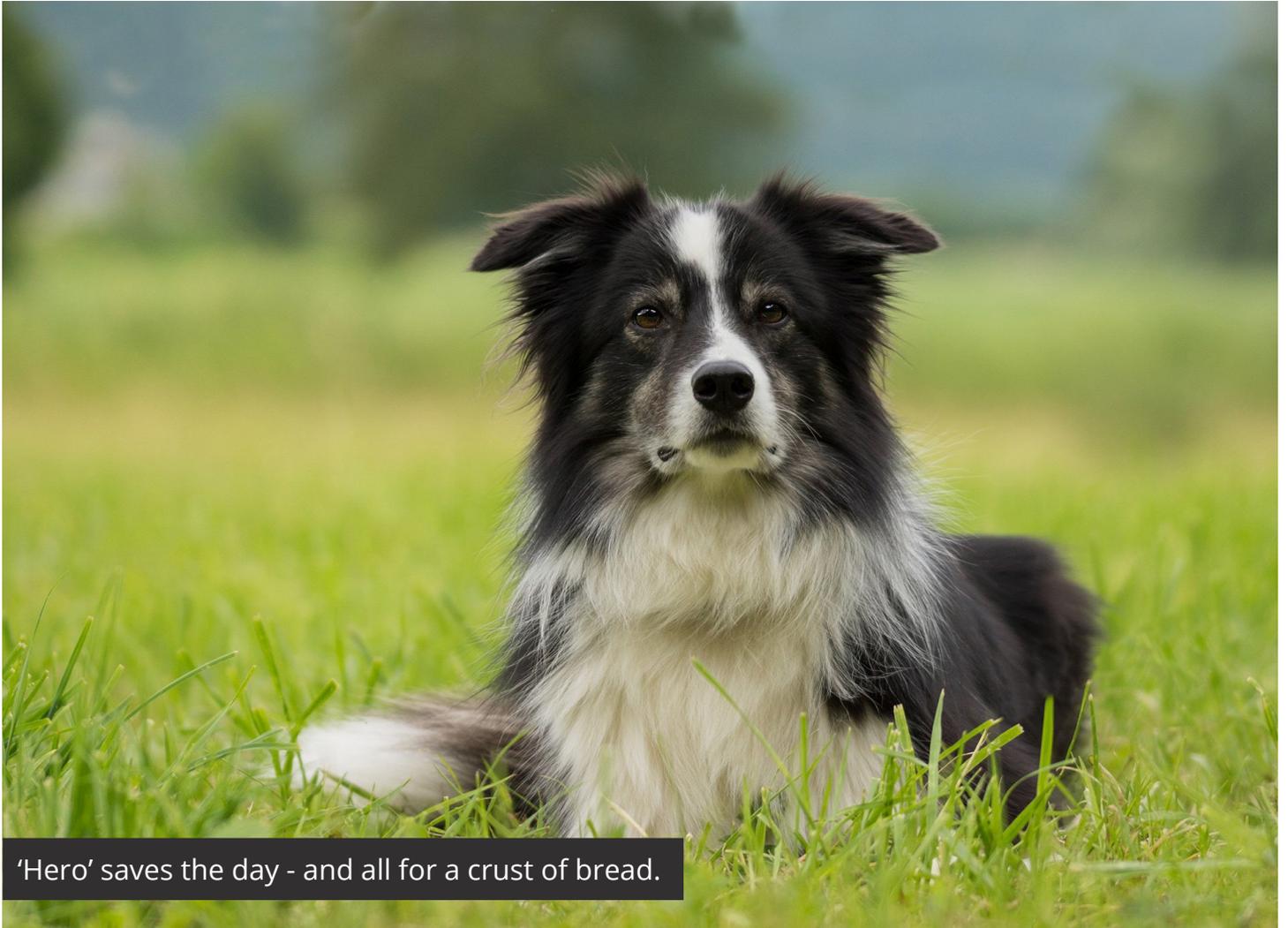


# STRAY SAVES THE DAY!

A MAN trapped under his own tractor was rescued yesterday by a stray dog he had met only an hour earlier.



'Hero' saves the day - and all for a crust of bread.

Peter Thornton of Ashton-in-the-Wold was ploughing a potato field on his arable farm at around 3pm on Wednesday. His tractor started to make an unfamiliar noise and the business-minded grower decided to have a look at it himself.

'You can't afford to get a mechanic out at the first sign of trouble,' he said, 'you have to become a bit of an expert with machinery yourself.' Unfortunately, as Peter crawled underneath the vehicle to examine a loose part hanging

down, the tractor rolled forward and pinned him to the ground by his leg.

'Stupidly, I'd left my mobile phone in the cab,' he reports, shaking his head, 'I thought I'd be stuck there until dusk, which is when I'd be missed. The pain was unbearable, I thought I was going to pass out.'

Then the unexpected happened. A stray dog, that Peter had seen earlier in the day, approached the tractor and appeared very interested in what was going on.

He sniffed around and eventually sneaked under the tractor to where Peter was trapped.

'When I saw the dog I didn't know what to think. If he'd decided to attack me then there wasn't anything I could do about it.' But the dog didn't attack Peter; instead, it began licking him and when he still didn't move the dog began to bark. The border collie cross then ran around the tractor in a wide arc and barked and barked. He kept this up for a full 30 minutes.



Ploughing can be a dangerous business

Eventually, some ramblers nearby came to see why this dog was barking so ferociously. One of the ramblers, Dave Podton, remembers the scene.

'We'd been able to hear the dog for some time as we were walking near to the perimeter of the field. When we eventually saw it, we couldn't understand what it was doing. It was running round and round the tractor, then under the tractor, then round and round, barking all the while. It struck us that it was strange to see a sheep dog on an arable farm. Then one of our number, Margaret, suggested we investigate the tractor as it looked like it had been abandoned in the middle of the field. I don't mind telling you, I wasn't keen. I thought the dog must be mad. But Margaret is a dog lover and she took the lead.'

'I advised them all not to look directly at the dog as that will come across as a threat, so we slowly walked towards the tractor. The dog continued to run around it, but nearer and nearer as we approached. I got the distinct impression this dog was trying to tell us something. Sure enough when we reached the tractor, we realised that someone was trapped underneath. Thank goodness for mobile phones!' Explained Margaret Grover.

The air ambulance and fire crew were called and between them, they managed to extricate Mr Thornton and rush him to Queen's Hospital in Brunnerly. Surgeons then worked on him for several hours to try to save his leg. The dog didn't leave his side until he took off in the helicopter.

Mrs Grover decided to take the dog, now named Hero, home for the night as he didn't appear to belong to anyone. But he won't stay there for long; Mr Thornton has vowed to give the dog a home for life.

'That dog saved me. The doctors said if I had been under there any longer, I would have had far more serious injuries, in fact I could have died. As it is, there is hope that I will be able to use my leg to some extent even though it will probably never go back to how it was. The least I can do is give Hero a home.'

'I had seen him earlier in the day and I gave him a bit of my lunch as he looked so hungry. But he's repaid that tenfold today and I'll be forever in his debt.'

By Charles Harwood