



## APRIL '25 NEWSLETTER

### Greetings to all Come Singing friends

Dear Everyone,

It's often said that we are a nation of animal lovers and there are probably many of you who are reading this who have a pet.



According to the PDSA (Peoples Dispensary for Sick Animals) 51% of us have a pet, with dogs being the most popular and cats only just behind. Rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, snakes, hamsters etc make up only 2% of pets.

We are fortunate to have the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) which was founded as long ago as 1824, is run by a hierarchy of Inspectors and has four animal hospitals. The RSPCA was the first and still is the largest organisation promoting animal welfare in the world. It relies on voluntary donations for its funding.



Humans and animals have a special relationship that goes back thousands of years. Dogs originally helped us, in hunting and farming, from prehistoric times and have developed to become “man’s best friend”. Our bond with our pets has mental, emotional and physical and social benefits for both parties. “They give us unconditional love and a sense of purpose”.

This is probably why **Pets As Therapy** ( PAT dogs) is such a successful national charity. Founded over forty years ago it enables volunteers and their dogs to visit people in hospitals, care homes, hospices, schools and prisons in their area. If your pet dog is over one year old and is “friendly, calm, healthy, well groomed and loves a fuss” and you would like to help others, perhaps you would like to volunteer.



There have been many poems about pets. Here is a funny one by Ogden Nash you may not have come across before:

*“The truth I do not stretch or shove  
When I state that the dog is full of love.  
I’ve also found, by actual test,  
A wet dog is the lovingest.”*

This one by Eleanor Farjeon is about the unusual places cats choose to sleep

Cats sleep  
Anywhere,  
Any table,  
Any chair,  
Top of piano,  
Window-ledge,  
In the middle,  
On the edge,  
Open drawer,  
Empty shoe,



Anybody's  
Lap will do,  
Fitted in a  
Cardboard box,  
In the cupboard  
With your frocks--  
Anywhere!  
*They don't care!*  
Cats sleep  
Anywhere.

Do you know the true story of Greyfriars Bobby? He was a small Skye or Dandy Dinmont terrier who lived over a hundred years ago in Scotland. He was so faithful to his master that he guarded his grave in Edinburgh for fourteen years. Bobby belonged to John Gray a night watchman for the Edinburgh City Police Force at the end of the nineteenth century.

His devotion to his owner caused him to sit faithfully by his grave in Greyfriars Kirkyard in Edinburgh for the following fourteen years. When Bobby eventually died, he too was buried nearby to John Gray. There is a commemorative statue to this faithful dog.



The inscription on his headstone reads

*“Greyfriars Bobby –died 14<sup>th</sup> January 1872 aged 16 years.  
Let his loyalty and love be a lesson to us all”*

Naming pets can be tricky. Thomas Hardy the famous author had several pets including cats and dogs. One cat was named “Kiddleywinkenpoops” but called Trot for short!

Can you identify these famous animals by their names?  
Answers at the end.

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Winnie the Pooh? | 6. Moby Dick?   |
| 2. Black Beauty?    | 7. Lassie?      |
| 3. Reynard?         | 8. Mickey?      |
| 4. Charlotte?       | 9. Barbar?      |
| 5. Kermit?          | 10. Shere Khan? |

If you were a child at school in the 1950s or '60s you may know the musical story of **Peter and the Wolf**. Perhaps you have heard of it? It was written by the composer Prokofiev around the mid 1930s and was based on an old Russian folk tale. The story and the music became very well known and have remained a favourite ever since. The story has been adapted as a cartoon by Walt Disney, performed by marionettes, become a punk musical ballet and recorded with narrators including Alec Guinness, Richard Baker, Sting and Dame Edna Everage. There have been numerous recordings and Concert hall and radio and TV performances.

The story goes something like this

Peter is a young boy who lives with his grandfather in a cottage in a forest clearing. One day Peter goes out into the clearing but forgets to shut the gate. A duck from the cottage garden follows him to swim in a pond nearby. A bird flies down and the duck and the bird have an argument over which is better, swimming or flying. The local cat appears and



quietly stalks them. The bird is warned by Peter and flies to the safety of a tall tree while the duck swims to the centre of the pond away from danger. Peter's grandfather comes out and scolds him for staying outside as there is a wolf around. Peter is taken inside and the gate is locked. Soon afterwards the wolf appears from the forest. The cat climbs the tree to safety, the bird is already there, but the duck is caught and eaten alive by the wolf.

Seeing this happen, Peter fetches a rope and climbs over the garden wall into a tree. He asks the bird to distract the wolf while he lowers a noose and catches the wolf by its tail. Peter ties the rope so that the wolf is caught. Just then hunters with guns appear; they had been tracking the wolf. Instead of shooting the wolf, Peter persuades them to take it to a zoo. They form a Victory Parade; first Peter then the bird and next the hunters leading the captured wolf, then followed by the cat and grandfather. (The duck can be heard quacking inside the wolf!).

This story was set to music and each character is represented by a tune played on a musical instrument.

Peter is represented by stringed instruments, the bird by a flute, the duck by an oboe, the cat by a clarinet, Grandfather by a bassoon, the wolf by three horns, and the hunters by kettle and bass drums.

You can listen to a performance of the story narrated by Richard Baker in 1971 – it may bring back some memories!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xmvu0PWmvT4>

Many other pieces of orchestral music describe animals. One of the most loved is by a Finnish composer Sibelius *The Swan of Tuonela*

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY\\_PE4TgRkM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QY_PE4TgRkM)

This is based on an old Finnish folk story telling of a mystical swan.

You may know about *The Carnival of the Animals* by Saint Saens

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmoZNL-LBKA>

This is a condensed version but you can hear lions, tortoises, elephants and kangaroos amongst other animals portrayed in music.



Other favourites include

*The Flight of the Bumble Bee* by Rimsky Korsakov:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aYAJopwEYv8>

*Walking the Dog* by George Gershwin: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iZmdgc7j-gw>

*The Cat Duet* by Rossini: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QNYR6rsGDyg>

*The Lark Ascending* by Vaughan Williams: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU-1zqUo80U>

Can you identify these popular songs featuring animals?

### QUIZ

1. A big hit for Patti Page in the '50s tells of a pet for sale but what was its price!
2. Elvis sang about a particular type of dog too.
3. There were two pets in this cartoon song about Sylvester and Tweety.
4. One of the biggest land animals who wanted to join a circus features in this song.
5. Another large creature who loves mud is featured in this well loved Flanders and Swan song.
6. This Doctor played by Rex Harrison in 1967 thought he could communicate with all animals.
7. "Tra la la twiddly dee dee it gives me a thrill to wake up in the morning on ....."?
8. The animal in the next song isn't an elk, a bison, an okapi or hartebeest but a \_ \_ \_.
9. We're going somewhere you can see lots of different animals in one place.
10. This little furry animal could be made into a pie!

### Answers to animal names quiz

1. Bear
2. Horse
3. Fox
4. Spider
5. Frog
6. Whale
7. Dog
8. Mouse
9. Elephant
10. Tiger

### Answers to popular songs quiz

1. How much is that doggie in the window?  
<https://www.yThisoutube.com/watch?v=FprodtirHT8>
2. You ain't nothing but a hound dog  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MMmljYkdr-w>
3. I tort I tor a puddy cat <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38aDWDUjIOY>
4. Nellie the elephant <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=28Rh9zRdXxA>
5. The Hippopotamus Song [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5M4tw\\_82PM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G5M4tw_82PM)
6. Talk to the animals <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YpBPavEDQCK>
7. Mocking bird hill <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=858z886W-GE>
8. The gnu song <https://www.youtube.cTheom/watch?v=YggPygyh4X4>
9. We're going to the zoo, zoo zoo zoo.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iTe9rhLC2XE>
10. Run rabbit [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXmk8dbFv\\_o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SXmk8dbFv_o)

**Your contributions to future newsletters, in any form, will be very welcome. Please send them to:**  
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