

Account of Purley on Thames

Animals - Pets

R200304 13/3/2017

Introduction

This section contains information about animals which have been kept as pets in Purley. There are many many species which would never appear in the wild in Purley which have been brought in as pets. This includes both domesticated breeds of animals whose relatives might, in other parts of the world, still roam free in the wild to exotic creatures brought here from all over the world.

It is divided into sub-sections as follows:-

- Cats
- Dogs
- Cage Birds
- Small caged animals
- Snakes and other reptiles
- Fish
- Circus Animals
- Other creatures

We have not included here animals such as horses and sheep which have occasionally been kept as pets but which are dealt with in the farm animals section (R200014) However we do cover animals such as greyhounds which while not strictly pets fit more naturally here than elsewhere.

Similarly circus animals have been included.

On the whole pets have not needed a licence, but where this has been required it will be noted.

Cats

Cats have probably been the most popular pets as they require so little looking after. There are numerous breeds and many mongrels. As a consequence of keeping cats many houses have been fitted with cat flaps to allow them to come and go as they wish.

Unfortunately cats have had a devastating impact on nesting birds. Statistics are very difficult to come by but estimates have indicated that in the nesting season, every cat left loose to hunt at night can destroy up to ten birds - mainly the very small ones.

Dogs

Dogs require a lot more looking after with the special need of being take for a walk each day. The sight of Purley residents exercising their dogs (and themselves) is something you can see almost every day and wherever you go. The most popular places are by the river and Sulham woods.

There are also professional dog walkers who can collect and shepherd up to as many as fifteen dogs at a time but the average is more like three or four.

Dogs can be very endearing creatures but they do like to poo and Purley has had enormous trouble over the years with pavements and children's play areas strewn with dog-poo. In recent years the Parish Council has erected bins around the parish for dog poo and from 2016 has been providing dispensers for plastic bags, but regrettably many dog walkers allow their pets to do what they want

where they want regardless of the dangers that this poses to children.

For most of Purley, dogs need to be kept on a lead but down by the river and in the woods they are often let loose. Again many dog owners seem oblivious to the presence of cattle in fields and complain bitterly when cows protecting their young charge at them and their dogs or a farmer takes a shot gun to the dogs.

Cage Birds

The most common cage birds are budgerigars and canaries but many people keep parrots with a few having other species. At one time many people kept pigeons but these generally had to be let out for racing or other purposes.

In past times hunting birds were kept but we are unaware of any in Purley for the last 200 years or so.

Small caged animals

Children love small furry creatures and many households have a rabbit hutch in the garden. They can also be a good source of food but this is very much out of fashion nowadays.

Tame rats and mice are very popular, ferrets used to be common but are no longer as Purley has moved from an agricultural to an urban situation.

There is a whole variety of small furry creatures popular with children such as gerbils, hamsters, guinea pigs and chinchillas. Most are very gentle but hamsters can get aggressive at times.

A further category is animals kept for their fur. Political correctness has all but destroyed this use of pets but at one time rabbits, chinchillas and mink were bred for this purpose. Unfortunately as this was regarded with disfavour many such creatures were released into the wild and mink particularly have become prolific on the Thames doing great damage to many of our traditional species.

Snakes and other reptiles

Snakes reptiles and amphibians have been kept as pets but we have little knowledge of them in Purley.

Fish

Goldfish have been kept in bowls inside the house as have many other exotic species of fish. They are easy to look after provided one has the proper environment which aerates the water and provides objects for the fish to swim around.

Many houses built fish ponds in the garden and spent large sums stocking them with fish. This was Ok until about 30 years ago when a heron colony established itself in the Thames Valley. They can clean out a fish pond in minutes as many people found to their cost so nowadays if you want an outside fish pond you must make sure it is well protected by netting.

Circus Animals

Over the years there have been many reports of circus animals being paraded around Purley. We have heard of camels and ostriches and several other kinds.

Other creatures

Most of the other creatures kept as pets such as pigs, sheep and goats can be regarded as farm animals. However for many years the owners of Purley Hall kept a small herd of llamas which often used to peer over the fence to the surprise of passing motorists.

John Chapman

