

June 16th

Memory verse

He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by their names.
(Ps. 147:4)

Something to read: The story of the RSPCA¹

We read part of John Evelyn's diary on June 3rd. He wrote in his diary on **16th June** 1670:

I was forced to accompany some friends to the Bear-garden, where was Cock-fighting, Bear, Dog-fighting, Bear and bull Baiting, it being a famous day for all these butcherly sports, or rather barbarous cruelties. The Bulls did exceedingly well, but the Irish Wolf dog exceeded, a stately creature indeed who beat a cruel Mastiff.

One of the Bulls tossed a Dog full into a lady's lap as she sat in one of the boxes at a considerable height from the arena. There were two poor dogs killed and so all ended with the Ape on horseback, and I most heartily weary of this rude and dirty past-time.

John Evelyn did not like these cruel sports and he had lived through days when they had not been allowed. After the Civil War when Oliver Cromwell became Lord Protector (1651) he (Cromwell) had attempted to bring Christian morality to bear on all aspects of national life. One of the measures brought in during the Commonwealth was a ban on many cruel sports including fox hunting.

With the return of Charles II such laws were swept away. The so called "Merry Monarch" got his pleasure at the expense of many poor helpless animals and his courtiers were only too happy to follow his bad example. Thousands of pounds were gambled away at cock fights, bull and bear baits and above all on horse racing which also was often attended with horrible cruelty. It would be nearly 200 years before there was a Christian influence in the land strong enough to cause a return to protection for animals.

On **16th June** 1824 a group of twenty-two gentlemen met at Old Slaughter's Coffee House in London. William Wilberforce, the great Christian man who's untiring efforts put an end to the slave trade, was there, as was his friend Thomas Fowell Buxton, another tireless worker in the same cause. Many of the others at the meeting were evangelical parsons as was the man who had called the meeting, Arthur Broome, vicar of Bromley-by-Bow.

Arthur Broome (1779-1837) was trying to start a society for the prevention of cruelty to animals. Wilberforce and his friends were interested in any plans to improved society and they joined in with a will. An act had already been passed in 1822 to make cruelty to cattle illegal but more was needed.

While non-Christians such as the philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1747-1832) were trying to justify protection for animals on grounds such as, "The question is not, can they *reason*? nor can they *talk*? but, can they *suffer*?" this Christian group of men had a clear basis to justify their society. "The proceedings of this Society are entirely based on the Christian Faith, and on Christian Principles"² noted the minutes in June 1832. The society was founded as the SPCA (Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) and began working for laws and attitudes that would promote the welfare of animals. Annual sermons on behalf of the society became a feature of church life.

¹ Adapted from Owen, Evan, *What Happened Today* Volume 2 Available on the *Mothers' Companion* Flashdrive.

² *RSPCA Minute Book No. 1*, pp. 38, 40-41.

What kinds of principles do we find in the Bible on this topic that made these gentlemen so concerned for animals? Interestingly, the Bible gives one definition of good behaviour *in terms* of animals and cruelty in Proverbs: “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast: but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” (Proverbs 12:10). How we treat our animals is a indicator of our moral state! When God created man in Genesis Chapter 1 it is recorded that man was given “dominion” over the animals. Man was to have charge of the animals but it was a harmonious relationship that involved no cruelty or misery for animals. The fall changed all that. All the sad things that animals suffer at the hands of human beings come from our sinful fallen nature. Since the fall, one purpose of government, according to the Bible, is to see that evil is punished (Romans 13). But in Britain in 1824 the law was defective in respect of animals. No punishments were prescribed for those who treated them cruelly, unless they fell inside the narrow scope of the 1822 Act. The men at that meeting in the coffee house were determined to see that state of affairs changed!

Thanks to the work of the society an Act was passed in 1835 in which bulls, dogs, bears, and sheep, were protected and bear-baiting and cock-fighting were prohibited. The movement back to Bible based morality in the area of animal welfare had truly begun.

In 1840 Queen Victoria became the society's patron, turning it into the RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals). Sadly, by this time, poor Arthur Broome had died. He suffered greatly on behalf of the society, having guaranteed it financially. When the society had money problems *he* ended up in the debtors' prison until the other members could raise the money for his release.

Something to write

In 1837 the society offered a prize for an essay. A donor had generously put up the money and it was hoped that public interest would be aroused by the competition. Here are the requirements for the essay:

The Essay required is one which shall morally illustrate, and religiously enforce,

- the obligation of man towards the inferior and dependent creatures
- their protection and security from abuse, more especially as regards those engaged in the service, and for the use and benefit of mankind
- on the sin of cruelty
- the infliction of wanton or unnecessary pain, taking the subject under its various denominations
- exposing the specious defence of vivisection on the grounds of its being for the interests of science
- the supplying the infinite demands on the poor animal in aid of human speculations by exacting extreme labour, and thereby causing excessive suffering
- humanity to the brute as harmonious with the spirit and doctrines of Christianity, and the duty of man as a rational and accountable creature.

There are some tricky words and difficult ideas here. Can you “translate” it into simpler language? Older children could have a shot at an essay on the points outlined in the SPCA competition. A couple of sentences on each point would be enough for quite a good piece of work and if you can manage more you might end up with an essay worthy of a prize!

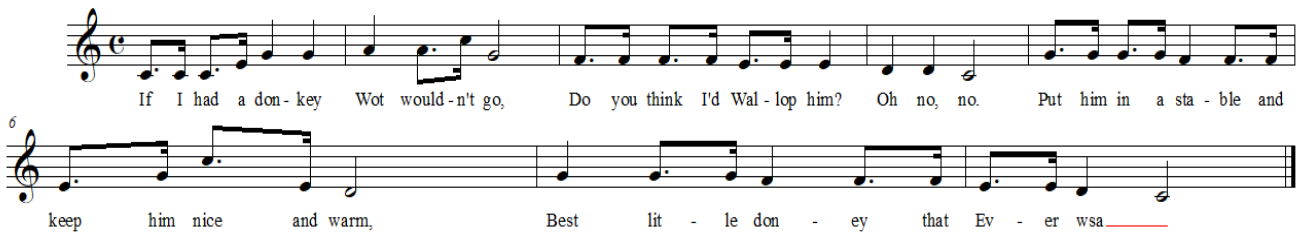
A puzzle to solve

Can you say which animals these are? If you have a printer available you can print the picture and finish the drawings.



Something to sing

The nursery rhyme “If I had a donkey” will amuse younger children. Actions can be added if desired; pushing the stubborn donkey that won't go, shaking the head on “Oh, no, no” etc. The rhyme is old but in its present form at least it has been linked with the 1822 Prevention of Cruelty to Cattle Act, perhaps originally as a gentle satire. The sound file in the Optional Resources files for today are just to help you learn the tune if you do not know it already.



The image shows two staves of musical notation in G major, 4/4 time. The first staff contains the melody for the first line of the rhyme, and the second staff contains the melody for the second line. The lyrics are written below the notes.

If I had a don- key Wot would -n't go, Do you think I'd Wal - lop him? Oh no, no. Put him in a sta - ble and
6 keep him nice and warm, Best lit - le don - ey that Ev - er wsa _____

Something to draw

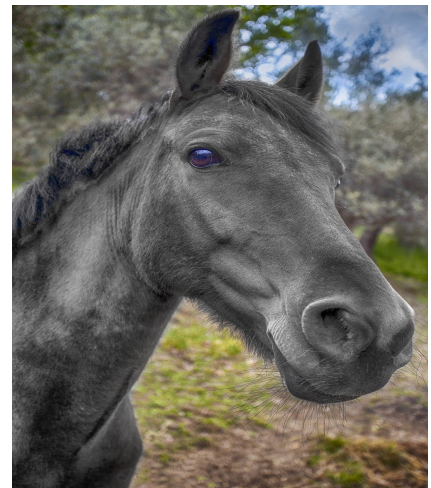
There are some examples of how to draw various animals by drawing round your own hand to start with in the optional resources files for today.

Something to think about

“The question is not, can they *reason*? nor can they *talk*? but, can they *suffer*?” Can you spot the difficulties in Bentham's line of reasoning?³ The modern RSPCA has largely adopted Benthamite reasoning.⁴ Certainly I can see nothing Bible-based on the society's website.

Something to Read

The first novel to be written with an animal as the narrator was Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty*. The book was written to explain to people how a horse should be treated and as a protest against cruelty to horses. It was first published in 1877 and has been popular ever since.⁵ It is an excellent book to read aloud.



3 Think about how we would *determine* whether animals suffer, for instance. By their expressions and noises? These may just be (it can be argued) reactions to stimuli not indications of suffering.

4 As you can see here: <https://science.rspca.org.uk/sciencegroup/sentience>.

5 If you do not have a copy an electronic copy it can be found here: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/271/271.txt>.