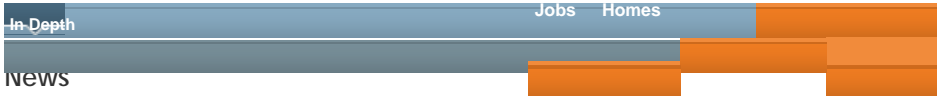




# The Northern Echo

## News



## Owners sing the praises of pets...

7:48am Monday 6th October 2008

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By Dani Webb »

THEY may not have come two by two, but animals answered the call at the weekend when they attended a North-East church to be blessed as part of World Animal Day.

Dogs, guinea pigs and budgies all took part in the unusual service at Stockton Parish Church, on Saturday.

The event, which is in its 13th year, was led by lay reader Bridget Noble.

More than 20 people attended the service and the animals were on their best behaviour.

Previous years have seen horses and goats being blessed in the church.

Space for horse boxes and trailers is made available outside to make all animals feel welcome.

Mrs Noble said: "It is wonderful that so many people have turned up despite the cold weather.

"This is the 13th year I have done this service and it is great that people are still coming back.

"The animals are wonderful – I couldn't live without them. They are so innocent, they deserve a blessing like this."

Mrs Noble said the new vicar, Reverend Alan Farish, had been a bit surprised when she told him about the animal blessing.

She added: "I think he was a bit shocked, but he has been very happy to take part and bring his own dog along.

"In the past, we have had lots of different animals, including horses, but I think it is a bit cold for them to come this time. They are always well behaved – we have only had one toilet accident before.

"The novelty has worn off a bit now, but it is good to see people are still coming back.

Hopefully, we will hold the blessing again next year."

Mr Farish used a clip from the film Shrek in his address to the congregation, likening it to a story in the Bible.

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Many of those attending the service said they had decided to come after spotting it in the church newsletter a few years ago and had returned each year ever since.

Paul and Karen Wilson, of Stockton, said they loved bringing their two chihuahuas to the service.

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BARK ALONG: Owners and pets at the service marking World Animal Day at Stockton Parish Church

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## Football Blog

### Get shirty

On the back of the England revival, there's no better time to show your colours.

#### The Toughest Job in the World

THE worst job I ever had was in my early twenties when, for two weeks, I was employed to dig discarded bricks out of a rubbish tip.

#### England expects

Barry and Lampard? Lampard and Gerrard? Gerrard and Barry?

#### Weirdness at Wembley

I covered the England game at Wembley last night and I'm still trying to work out what was the weirdest - the sight of four Kazakhstan supporters having their photograph taken with four drunken Englishmen in Borat mankinis or the sensation of leaving a ground slightly disappointed at a 5-1 win.

#### Close - but no cigar

Well we were never going to win it - but in the end we missed out on the prize pot by an inch.

#### Has there been a best moment so far?

THURSDAY night is journalist night on Radio Tees and myself and Scott Wilson have taken turns on Ali Brownlee's show this season.

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