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Friday, 2nd October 2009

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Dog owners stepping out for walk to mark World Animal Day

Published Date: 02 October 2009
By HAZEL MOLLISON

DOG owners are preparing for a mass walk through the city centre, with many dressed in Victorian costume, in the first Scottish parade to mark World Animal Day.

Hundreds of people – and their pets – are set to assemble in West Princes Street Gardens on Sunday afternoon, before marching through the Grassmarket.

They will be led by Greyfriars Bobby lookalike, Blue, and Brian McKenzie, dressed as Colour Serg eant Scott, the officer who befriended the famous pooch. Pipe Major Robert Anderson will accompany the walkers as they head towards Greyfriars Kirkyard.

The One O’Clock Gun and Timeball Association originally came up with the idea of bringing characters from the story to life.

But they have now won support from many other groups, including the Skye Terrier Club and Edinburgh College of Art.

Edinburgh Central MSP Sarah Boyack is supporting the event, saying it is a good way to highlight animal welfare issues. She will be speaking at Bobby’s memorial.

Although dog-owners will dominate the parade, there will be some unusual participants including a pet hedgehog owned by art student Alis Bodgener.

George Robinson, the association’s secretary, said they expected at least 200 walkers to take part. They hope it will become an annual event.

He said: "World Animal Day is celebrated around the world, but there’s very little in Scotland at the moment.

"We’ve had people putting a lot of work into preparing their costumes, and I expect we’ll get quite a crowd. It’s very appropriate that it goes through the Grassmarket, as it has a strong animal connection – there used to be visiting menageries and circuses there in the 19th

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century."

Walkers will be coming from all over the country to take part, including members of the Skye Terrier Club and the Dandie Dinmont Terrier Club – one of the oldest dog clubs in the world.

World Animal Day is celebrated in 66 countries around the world, with events such as animal blessing services in churches, parades and open days at animal rescue centres. The event was started in 1931, as a way of highlighting the plight of endangered species.

Ms Boyack said: "Over the years, it's grown to encompass all animals and celebrate the companionship they bring to people's lives. It is also a chance to make people aware of the need to protect animals, through tough action on wildlife crime and high welfare standards.

"There's already been a lot of good work done in the farming industry, and our animal welfare standards are much higher than other countries."

"Greyfriars Bobby is a very human tale which epitomises the loyalty animals show to owners."

People should assemble at 1:30pm near the statue of Bum the dog in Princes Street Gardens, before setting off at 2pm.

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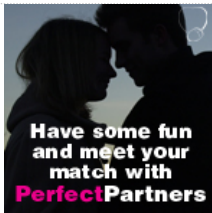
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