

Garston Animal Rescue: How we began ...

We started in 1984 with the rescue of an exhausted and half-starved mother cat and her five new-born kittens from a bin in Liverpool city centre.

We had no idea at the time that this sort of thing was, sadly, a common occurrence. That cats, having been abandoned by their owners once they had tired of them, would end up living on the streets, sometimes in precarious situations in busy factory sites, dockside areas, hospital grounds, skips, back yards of terraced houses (much to the surprise of their occupants), etc. But luckily, not so often in a bin, like our little Mum Cat back in 1984.

I suppose we were quite naïve at the time, but we made up for this naivety with masses of energy and enthusiasm to help.

We gave up our house to look after these poor creatures, and gave up our time to care for them. Things became quite desperate as we never quite had enough money to pay for things like vets bills. And there were plenty of them because when we weren't working in full-time jobs to keep a roof over our heads and to provide shelter for these lovely cats, we were going out rescuing un-neutered feral cats, and then getting them spayed. Which cost us lots of money, so we had to think of other ways to try and raise enough finance to keep things going. And we certainly managed to prevent endless unwanted litters of kittens being born to a life of homelessness, misery, starvation and vulnerability to attack by thugs.

A couple of years or so later a work colleague mentioned that we should become a charity – as after all we were doing nothing but

charitable work. Not quite so easy as it sounded as it turned out, but after several home-made attempts to get proper binding rules in place (the luxury of a lawyer to guide us through the red-tape was way beyond our reach!) the Charity Commission finally accepted us, and so in 1988 we became Garston Animal Rescue.

We incorporated many rules in our constitution to try and protect the animals. For example, one of our first undertakings was that we would never have a healthy animal destroyed. We had already seen more than enough of this in the large animal welfare organisations and it had left us both distraught and heartbroken.

Another aim was that we would try to improve the lot of animals through public education, and that we would do everything in our power to encourage people to get their pets neutered – to prevent the wholesale abandoning of unwanted litters of kittens and puppies. To this end we ran stalls in town with our own leaflets explaining how quickly numbers of unwanted animals could spiral out of control and that all it took was one routine operation to spay or neuter at any local vet.



As we struggled on we became a bit better-known, and supporters joined us along the way, which of course was a lifeline for us. Volunteers started helping us and made our burden a lot easier to cope with.

Supporters opened a shop in Lark Lane to raise money for us. The fact that a donated ironing board was used as the counter shows the type of improvisation we were working under! It was certainly testament to the dedication of the kind volunteers who gave up their time to help us and the animals. This only closed when the two volunteers who ran it left Liverpool for family reasons.

Our second shop was sadly plagued by shoplifters and huge costs, such as the main window being smashed by local hooligans. To say the least we didn't make any profit from this shop, and we closed it down as soon as we could exit our tenancy agreement.

But we were learning. Our third shop was – and is – a fantastic little place. “A little Aladdin's Cave” it has been called by some enthusiasts. You can get pretty much anything you want from here to set up your home, from curtains and cushions, to pots and pans – and everything in between – except maybe the cooker and the kitchen sink! And all at pretty reasonable prices too. So this provides an income of sorts, but not enough. But we do also have wonderful supporters who contribute to us by Standing Order every month, quarter, and so on.

This all keeps things ticking over – but it still isn't really enough to meet our main aim - which is to buy proper dedicated premises so

that we can rescue more animals. It would be a dedicated sanctuary for rescued wildlife and farm animals too. We believe that all animals, not just cats and dogs, have the capacity to suffer. We also want to have an education centre within the sanctuary premises as we think that the future lies with the young, and we would like everyone to have the opportunity to learn about animals. We want our sanctuary to be a haven of peace and tranquillity for rescued animals, helpers and supporters. But mainly we want to provide sanctuary for abused animals.

Read a bit more about us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/GarstonAnimalRescue, or call us on 0151 494 0470 or 07745 167170, or email us at info@garstonanimalrescue.com. Or view www.garstonanimalrescue.com. Our shop is at 62 Aigburth Road, L17 7BN, 'phone 0151 727 0515, open Mon – Sat from 9am to 5.30pm. Ring first over public holiday periods to check if/when open.

Volunteers always welcomed, whether here with the animals or in our Charity Shop. And of course we're always more than grateful for donated items for the shop, or donations to help with our work here with the lovely rescued animals. Or you could even do a fund-raiser for us!



Thank you so much if you are able to help in any way.

Registered Charity 701001