



# Introduction and thanks

*WANDERING ALONG A QUIET* London street on a hot August afternoon while flicking through my A-Z map book, I walked right into a cat on the pavement. Luckily, the cat didn't mind too much since he was enclosed by iron railings and made of stone.

Being someone who has a fondness for animals (cats and dogs in particular), I took a closer look and saw that the railings displayed a plaque with a mobile phone code. Curious, I swiped my phone and was taken aback when the statue came to life with the voice of Helen Lederer. I placed my ear closer to the speaker and tried to listen, though it was difficult with the many buses that chose that moment to roar past.

'Am I male or am I female?' purred the cat (or more accurately, Helen). 'Am I myth or am I truth?'

Then I noticed another plaque that revealed this to be none other than Dick Whittington's cat, marking the very spot where Dick reputedly heard the Bow Bells tell him to 'Turn again, Dick Whittington, thrice Lord Mayor of London.' It was all quite surprising and rather wonderful.

Back home, later that day, I began to investigate the statue some more. As the Internet is wont to do, I found myself taken off to hundreds of related statue stories. I discovered the tales behind many of these to be touching, intriguing, sometimes funny, and, it must be said, occasionally pretty weird.

In short, this chance encounter with a limestone moggie led to my becoming a little obsessed by these pets who have been immortalised as monuments. I have loved bringing some of the more interesting of these tales together here and I hope you enjoy reading them.

## A BIG THANK YOU

Around a third of the photographs in this book came from people on Flickr (the photo-sharing website) who gladly let me use their wonderful shots and without whom the book would not exist. They are credited at the end. Please do check them out; they have done some excellent work.

I would also like to thank Helen Cobb for taking some beautiful pictures for me. Plus Ian King and Jean-Pierre Collin for their superb shots of Gelert's grave and Le Cimetiere Des Animaux Domestiques.

I spoke to and met with some incredibly interesting people while working on this project. Thanks so much to Katherine Barnett from Chartwell for introducing me to Jock the Cat, to Clive who showed me round Hyde Park Pet Cemetery, and to PC Paul Nicholls who filled me with enthusiasm for his national memorial to UK police dogs.

Thanks to Alison Hobson of Fairford History Society, Rita James of CAGED, and Patrick Roberts who runs the brilliant Purr 'n' Fur website. I am



FIGURE 5: Dick Whittington's cat.

also indebted to Dr Eric Tourigny who shared some fascinating information about pet cemeteries, and to Joel Walker who created the Ruswarp statue and was happy to provide interesting insights into her work.

Some of my enquiries took me overseas, at least by email! Thanks to Yuta Sakaguchi for his *Maneki* cat information, Travis Souther at the Abraham Lincoln Museum, Anadolu Kedisi in Istanbul, and the Russian cat blogger Bz Viola.

I suspect that many people may be tempted to pick up this book because it mentions their wildlife hero Chris Packham on the cover. Thanks so much to Chris for helping with this venture and writing the book's foreword. I am also indebted to my good friend John Witton who proofread the manuscript.

Finally, thank you to my daughters, Sophie and Jasmine, for all their help and input. And of course a big hug for my dog, Lexi, whose picture I have managed to shoehorn into the text here and there and who is one of the reasons I can get up each morning with a smile on my face.

#### DISCLAIMER

Why no horses? you may well ask. My apologies that we decided not to include horse statues. There are such a large number of them – many military in nature – that they really deserve a book of their own.

I should also clarify that I am merely a pet and history enthusiast and not a qualified historian. For a more in-depth and scholarly coverage of many of these topics, Hilda Kean has an informative website – [hildakean.com](http://hildakean.com)

Finally, while I have included a selection of places where you can see various monuments, this is by no means exhaustive. After completing the first draft of this book I became aware of a new project being run by Eric Tourigny at Newcastle University. Eric is hoping to create a database of pet memorials and is encouraging people to use the Ancient Animals app from Exeter University to report any they discover. You can find out more by searching for Finding Fido on the Newcastle University website. And please do contact me too with any discoveries, observations, pictures, etc. I'd love to hear from you.

*monumentaltales.org.uk*