



PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release September 2026

Celebrity Shetland Pony and UK Dementia Ambassador to Join Ely Cathedral's Annual Animal Service

Mr Jack Brock, celebrity Shetland Pony and UK Dementia Ambassador, will be among the special guests at Ely Cathedral's much-loved Annual Animal Service on Sunday 20 September at 1.30pm.

For more than 30 years, Ely Cathedral has welcomed animals through its doors for this very special service – one of the first cathedral services of its kind. The annual event celebrates the many ways animals enrich our lives, from the companionship of beloved family pets to the vital work of animals in service, including therapy dogs, guide dogs and military dogs.

This year's service will focus particularly on the important contribution animals make to our health and wellbeing – bringing comfort, companionship and joy to people who are unwell or in care, while providing invaluable support to those who rely on them.

Canon Jenny Wright, who will be leading the service and attending with her spaniel, Rex, said: "The annual Animal Service at Ely Cathedral is always a joyful and heartwarming event. Our pets play such an important part in our lives, and this is a perfect chance to bring them to the Cathedral and give thanks for all they mean to us.

This year, the service will focus on how animals contribute to our health and wellbeing simply by being present in our lives, bringing joy to those who are sick and in care, as well as supporting people who need them – particularly Therapy Dogs and Guide Dogs.

Canon Jenny Wright adds "I am really looking forward to introducing everyone to Mr Jack Brock and his owner, Ali, and finding out more about his role as UK Dementia Ambassador, as well as the work they do to raise awareness and funds for this devastating illness."

The informal, family-friendly service is always a highlight of the Cathedral's calendar, with numerous animals expected to attend. Previous four-legged and furry visitors have included dogs, cats, guinea pigs, rabbits, ferrets and tortoises, alongside the Cathedral's favourite donkey, Marley.

The service will also recognise the work of local animal charities, with representatives from organisations including Therapy Dogs Nationwide and Cats Protection attending the event.

Animal welfare remains central to the occasion, and the Cathedral is asking owners to consider their pets' wellbeing carefully and not bring any animal that may become anxious or distressed by the experience.

The special service has previously featured on BBC's *Songs of Praise* and ITV's *This Morning*, highlighting its unique place in the Cathedral's calendar.

Everyone is warmly invited to attend, with their furry, feathered, four-legged – or not-so-furry – friends and family members.

Animal Service - Ely Cathedral
Sunday 20 September at 1.30pm

ENDS

Images: Please see link - <https://elycathedral.resourcespace.com?c=331&k=6451d0c9d8>

For further information please contact Lesley Ann Thompson, Director of Communications 07930 918885

Notes to Editors:

About Mr Jack Brock & Ali Stearn - Jack Brock is a miniature Shetland pony, standing at just 29 inches tall. Full of character and charm, he lives with his owner Ali Stearn and her family on their farm in Norfolk. Ali has owned Jack since he was just three years old, and their bond has grown ever since. Ali and Jack have been voluntarily visiting care homes and children's hospices for over 10 years, and since 2019 have fundraised to support Dementia UK, the specialist dementia nursing charity.

During Jack's care home visits over the years, he has often been full of mischief and after the biscuits! But he has also been there for people during their darkest moments, standing calmly by their bedsides to be stroked. If patients are too poorly to come downstairs, Jack has travelled up to them via the lift!

Jack and Ali have been recognised for their service to the community, receiving a thank you letter from the Lord Lieutenant of Norfolk, the late Queen's representative. Ali has been a guest at Downing Street and the House of Commons for their charity work and Jack won Animal Hero of the Year in 2022.

Together, Ali and Jack go into care homes to support those living with dementia, and in addition the pair have raised over £25k for charity through organising fundraising walks with Jack and through sales of their Christmas cards. Their charity endeavours have resulted in national press coverage, including a Daily Mail feature, ITV news interview and more recently appearances on ITV's Love Your Weekend with Alan Titchmarsh and BBC Morning Live. Jack also has a large following on social media, with over 24k followers.

Inspired by the famous Norfolk-based miniature Shetland pony and dementia ambassador Jack Brock, picture book author Ali Stearn has written and illustrated a new picture book about the fun they have organising and attending fundraising walks in aid of Dementia UK. Ali started painting in 2018 with support from her artist sister, Tilly, who sadly passed away in July 2023.