

NLPR was delighted to receive, 'out of the blue', an email from Gemma, the niece of the deceased Clive Rowe, on 16th May 2011, almost three years since his tragic death. We welcomed Gemma's contact and for kindly informing us of the love and care Scruffy and Coco received prior her uncle's illness and death. It is only right that We give Gemma, her family and her deceased uncle the respect and understanding they deserve by meeting Gemma's request and sharing with you, in Gemma's own words, her letter as an addendum to Scruffy and Coco's story.

Tuesday 17th May 2011.

Hi,

I just recently stumbled across your site and the link with regard to Coco and Scruffy. I'll be honest with you, I'm absolutely devastated to hear that the birds were in such bad living conditions. (I'm Clive's niece by the way.)

I will in no way try to defend the way that you found the birds, like I say, I'm gutted to hear that was the case. But I would like to put across that I can genuinely and honestly say that this was not always the case.

I used to go and visit my Uncle to see him and the parrots. I was always in awe of them, I think they're amazing birds. They absolutely adored him (as far as I could tell) and he them. (Although I can appreciate from what you found that it would not appear so.)

I cannot profess to know much about parrots and I know they are a 'specialist' animal to care for, but they were always clean, as were their surroundings, and one of the times I had previously visited he had built a lovely aviary out the back for them, I don't know if you saw this when you were there and from the sounds of things I don't know what condition it would have been in. But he was very proud of it and had put a lot of time and effort into it. It was spotless when we visited.

I never actually saw them in their cage. He used to have them out all the time. You mention Coco could fly well, this is because he would have them out with him and let them fly. They would always return to him... Well, there was one exception... Coco decided to go for an adventure! But as people were used to the sights of them circling overhead around Swaffham Clive was soon informed of his whereabouts, not too far away. He went to where Coco was, and he swooped, straight back down on his shoulder!

We used to laugh at the damage they would cause around the house, picking the wall-paper off, (He always questioned why he bothered with a border (do you call it wallpaper edging? I can't think!) But it gave them some fun picking at it and tearing it off!) They also enjoyed pulling the back out of the leather sofa.

When he lived with his partner at the time when I would visit, she would say how they would be peering out the window at the time he would be returning from work, and start shouting when they saw him!

I can hand on heart say that when I saw him last with them, and all times prior to that, they were his life. I can only imagine what he would have said back then to know that this would be his legacy after being murdered, that his name would be on public display portraying him in such a light. But again, you only know what was found, and I obviously cannot justify the way that was.

I just wanted to give a brief explanation as I feel I need to do this on his behalf, although I know you are most unlikely to have any compassion for him after what you witnessed.

I can confess I hadn't seen him and the parrots for a couple of years. After reading this I wish I had done, as maybe I could have helped him, and helped prevent such an appalling situation. It really saddens me.

Yes, I totally agree that the birds have now landed on their feet after how they were kept. But I hope that by the fact you say how good they are with people, you can read beneath and see that he (once?) spent so much time with them out, and they were constantly with him, sometimes on his shoulder preening his beard... being handled, and kept stimulated.

I don't know if Scruffy will still do it, but he used to sit on my uncle's finger, he would lift him in the air and then swoop down with him saying 'where are the ghosts' and Scruffy would make ghost sounds. Just a silly something that used to make me giggle!

I spoke to the neighbours after it happened. They said how they would always hear him having talks with them, and singing songs out loud in the mornings I don't think it was always welcomed at early hours!

I can't imagine how you will take this e-mail, you will have seen so many sad stories and heard so many excuses in your time. But this is no excuse, as I cannot excuse what you found, but wanted to explain this was not always so. I still find it hard to come to terms that this happened, it literally makes me shake my head in disbelief.

I can only hope that you can take some of it on board.

From the bottom of my heart I thank you for taking the birds on. I'm so glad to hear they are happy and thriving with your care. Regardless of your feeling toward him I know that Clive would be happy for this too. To know they were still together and being cared for.

I would desperately love to see them, but I understand you are highly unlikely to allow that.

Also to explain, we were led to believe that the parrots had been taken in by [NLPR: A large parrot zoo in Lincolnshire] a different organisation. The silly thing is I visited there and was standing outside the aviary doing ghost sounds etc to see if I could get any response! Oh dear!!!

I had been giving monthly donations in support of them. However, I have now informed them that I now know the parrots aren't in their care, and that I have had to stop the payments. Instead I will now be setting up those monthly payments to yourselves in recognition of your help with Scruffy and Coco, and on Clive's behalf.

For all the wrongs in his life Clive did very much love them both, they were literally his life. Obviously his mental health must have deteriorated beyond that I ever knew, and the fact that in the week or so prior to his murder he had just had a shoulder operation rendering one arm immobile, did obviously unfortunately take its toll, sadly to their detriment.

You can appreciate that I can only imagine the horrendous scene of the murder, following my uncle being stabbed countless times in both the back and front, one wound hitting the main artery leading to his heart. Irrespective of your feelings towards him on the basis of your findings, it is hard as a member of his family coming to terms with what happened to deal with. To see that this will be forever publicised on your site is somewhat hard to take.

I don't intend to sound disrespectful to anybody by saying this, but hope that you can see where I am coming from.

I have phoned ahead and asked if this can be forwarded to the trustees looking after Scruffy and Coco. You have my heartfelt thanks for all you have done for them, and that you continue to do so.

Kind regards, and many thanks again.

Gem.x

Andelphine and Michael have invited Gemma to visit Scruffy and Coco with heartfelt understanding.