

Colleen's Year

News from the Tamar Valley Donkey Park & Sanctuary



Well hello or should I say eeyore. I have been given the job of telling you what has been going on at the Park/Sanctuary since our last newsletter.

My name is **Colleen** a good old Irish name as I came from Ireland in 1989, with the first group of rescued donkeys to come to the Tamar Valley Donkey Park & Sanctuary.

Do you know its 20 years since we arrived so many things have happened, with changes all for the better.

The Park will be having an anniversary celebration weekend 27th & 28th June with lots of extra activities going on, come and join us if you can.

I just hope it does not delay my feed times!

Well let's start.

New friends come to live at the park

In January 08 **Sasha & Tilly** arrived, they did not have to travel far as **Tilly** belonged to a lady 500 trots (yards) from the park on the other side of the main road, we used to hear them eeyore some days. **Sasha** was born at Sorley Tunnel Farm Park in 2000 and taken on by the park in 2001. He went straight to be a companion to **Tilly** as her previous buddy had died. **Tilly** had started to show her age and Tamsin (Park owner) suggested that they both came to the park so **Tamsin** and **Caroline** (animal care) could look after her feet. **Sasha** was told that later in the year he would start to do donkey rides and earn his keep, as I did until I was retired on the grounds of age (grand to be old). You can see **Sasha** do his first ride with young **Bethany** on his back if you visit the park's "Facebook" page on the internet (that's what our people say as I do not understand computers!)



Popeye & Daisy the Kune Kune pigs came from a local family who got them as cute little piglets, but they grew! However they do like de-turfing and it only took them 2 weeks to remove all the grass in the old rabbit warren, no wonder the Park was asked to take them in. They are great escape artists and as us donkeys do not like pigs we eeyore very loudly to let our people know they are out.

The O'Rielly Irish boys as they are known (**Declan , Percy , Paddy & Seamus**) came to the Park in March 2008, from a lady in North Devon who has rescued all kind of equines. She rescued the boys from Dublin when they were 6 months old (now about 5) unfortunately the kind lady has gone down with arthritis so to lighten her load they came to be with us. The lady had spoilt them so much that they came with not only rugs that go right up their necks, but also ones to wear at night which we all say are pyjamas He-He!



Beano came just before Christmas 2008 from just down the road in Gunnislake. He is a miniature Shetland in his late 20's. The elderly couple that owned him were moving as the husband had to go into a nursing home and as he was the one that always looked after **Beano** a new home was needed urgently He is so cute half my size.





Tamsin one of our people and also the mother of young **Bethany**, who live in the white bungalow on the park, went to find a pony for **Bethany**. Unfortunately she could not find one but came across **Minty** (known as **MintyMoo**) at a stables, he had a very swollen eye, which had not been treated for a year by the owner as they said it was just a dry eye. **Tamsin** could not leave him so bought him and as soon as they arrived back at the sanctuary called the vet. He started treatment, which lasted 6 months but it did not produce a complete cure. The vet said the only thing to do was to have the eye removed, as he believed **Minty** was in a great deal of pain, this was done in May 2008. **Minty** had to go up to Cullompton in East Devon to a vet who specialised in eye surgery, where the operation costing £700 was carried out. Since then he has been like a new pony and won lots of rosettes at 2 shows only 10 days and 3 weeks after his operation. He loves **Bethany** riding him on the park, on the road or at shows.

MiniMoo you will hear about later in this newsletter.

Departed friends but not forgotten

In October 2007 very suddenly we lost **Arkle** who was also one of the first donkeys from Ireland in 1989. The vet visited nine times night and day over two and a half days but we still had to say goodbye.

And then one morning in March 2008 **Bridget** was very very poorly and could not get up from the floor of the donkey house. I was so sad as I travelled over from Ireland with **Bridget** and she was like a mum to me. She was 49, which was a very good age for a donkey.

Lulu who's show name was Cussop Reflection came to us 6 years ago and was the perfect pony with such good manners. She became **Minty's** sole mate until she had heart failure at the age of 37 in October and we had to say a very sad goodbye.

Tilly unfortunately only survived until the summer; even with the intensive treatment of her hooves the vet in the end said there was nothing more could be done. **Sasha** said a very sad farewell to **Tilly**. The other donkeys especially **Mary** took care of him and he is full of him self again.

Four of our cheeky goats have gone to that big goat home in the sky,
Jill, Bethany, Barley & Star.

In the media

Well this last year we have had the TV cameras around twice and one crew was from France.



Minty was so bereft at losing his mate **Lulu** he neighed for two days so **Tamsin** and **Caroline** decided that, as he would not bond with us long ears they would have to find him a new friend. They went onto the Internet and found a miniature black and white Shetland who needed a new secure home as she could never be ridden again due to a genetic problem with her hips. Guess what her name was **MiniMoo** so that was that, they immediately left for Dawlish Warren in the donkey box to collect her and the ponies bonded straight away. **Julia Fisher** a reporter from West Country Today came along and did an excellent item for the program (It brings tears to your eyes) See it on the new web site in a few weeks time.

In October a TV crew from France channel 3 program "30 millions d'amis" followed us around for a whole day 8am – 6pm. The program is repeated regularly on channel 3 and in English on French International channel 5, so if you are on holiday in France you may see us. I also heard that it may be on our new website.

Carbon Hoof Print

The park is still trying to implement several green initiatives and **Annie** the "Dog sheep" is doing her bit too! She loves to eat the shredded paper in the office along with any fresh plain paper. The other day **Annie** grabbed an invoice off the desk and started to eat it **Old David** and **Julia** chased her to try and get it out of her mouth with no luck, they are now waiting for someone to tell them it has not paid yet, as they do not know who the invoice was from!

New Website

I hear that our new www.donkeyparks.com will be up and running very soon. You will be able to see new pictures of us all and some video clips. Keep visiting the website to see what is going on and if **Old David** gets his way we will have a web cam so you can see us trotting around (I never trot!)

Donkey Box

The donkey box that has carried me to many functions (Palm Sunday, Fetes, Carol singing & Trago at Christmas) went for its MOT and failed big time. It was going to cost more than £700 just to fix the rust. Our people decided that it was time to stop patching it up as it had cost £400 last year! The nice lady called **Bracken** who now arranges all the PR did an article about me not having any transport to get to Palm Services this last Easter. The Western Morning News did a very nice picture of **Old David** and me looking under the bonnet of the donkey box with long faces. After reading the article a lady from Exeter offered to loan us her small box, which was lovely to travel and load in. I do hope the park can get some money to buy one just like it, as I do not know how I will get to some of the shows and events later this year.



So Long Old Box



I Want One Like This!



Bee On a Flower!

Cherry & Bracken Shetland Ponies

For many years **Cherry and Bracken** have been sharing their paddocks with a large cob called **Seth** who was owned by a friend of **Tamsin's** called **Tammy**. **Tammy** and her family recently moved to Bere Alston and found some grazing for **Seth so Cherry and Bracken** jumped at the chance to go with him to some new grass! They all boxed into a very big horsebox, even **Cherry** who had not been in a box for over 20 years. We hear that they have settled in very well and our people have been to visit them several times.

Medical Spot

Kit continues as before and some days her feet are much better than others (like **Old David**).

Copper is now feeling her age and gets lost and confused easily. Her teeth don't let her eat hay or solid food so she has three sloppy feeds a day. I often find her with her tongue hanging out the vet says her swallowing reflex is not working properly. Her stomach works like a good Swiss clock always on time and at 12 noon she is eeyoring for her feed.

Crackers has "wobblers" which is due to him being fed too much protein when he was a foal. He has had to give up doing donkey rides.

Tamsin and Caroline have been trying out a new idea on our hooves to make them harder. The potion was developed at the Big Donkey Sanctuary and is made up by mixing sugar and iodine and putting it on our hooves as a poultice.

Poppy has continued to improve on her Asthma medication. **Tamsin** tries to keep **Poppy** and her daughter **BusyLizzie** out in the fresh air most of the time; they are usually in the small paddock, which has a small shelter. On dry nights they are allowed into **Old David** and **Julia's** garden, it stops **Old David** having to cut the grass (*lay zee!*)

Celebration Weekend 27th & 28th June 2009

To celebrate the following

The Park open 20 years
Our people being here 10 years
The Donkey Drop-In open 5 years
And **Treacle's** 3rd birthday

The park is having extra activities over the weekend. The weekend will be opened by **Alexis Bowater** who many of you would have seen on ITV local news.

Around the Park

A nice chap called **Penny** has brought his big tractor and put in lots of posts so we have some more paddocks. He has also replaced some fencing so the sheep and donkeys don't escape around the park. **Lauren's** (donkey worker) dad has been practicing his skills at tree surgery and trimmed some of our trees in the woods. We still get lots of young boys and girls doing their work experience, college day release at the park, community service & volunteering.

Kit, Copper and I have fun getting them into shape fetching our feeds on time.

Shop on-line

I understand that very shortly you will be able to arrange and pay for Donkey Adoptions on-line and also to buy a gift to go with the adoption if you would like.

Previous Newsletters and Media Reports

On the new web site you will be able to see previous newsletters and media articles about the Donkey Park.

Credit Crunch!

The only crunch we are interested in is the crunch of carrots and apples, but we hear that these may be in short supply if the "credit" one stops visitors coming to the park, as it only survives on the support of you and our day visitors. To help our people have kept the entrance charges the same as last year.

Colleen on a train!

Last year I nearly got on a train to Plymouth! It was the one hundredth celebration of the Calstock Viaduct, which takes trains over the river Tamar into Devon and onto Plymouth. I was invited to be at Gunnislake station to re-enact the use of donkeys that took daffodils to the train for the London flower market. I was on the platform when the train came in and the doors opened in front of me; I was just going to step in when **Old David** stopped me (shame)



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The Dentist help!!

Well I nearly forgot but about a year ago they kept calling me "grumpy donkey" as I would not eat hay and kept trying to nibble any staff that groomed me.

Then on the next equine dentist visit Chris the vet found I had a tooth that was sticking into the side of my mouth and that's why I could not eat hay as it hurt so much if only I could talk! It took Chris three visits to eventually remove my tooth with his boys toys (big electric drill with attachment made my jaw vibrate) I'm not so grumpy now and can eat hay all day.



Well that's all folks, as they say, for this edition of our newsletter, thank you all for adopting us and we hope this lets you know that your donation is well spent.

Regards from all the Donkeys and our friends here at the park until next time. Do visit us when you are in our area again or visit our new website. **Colleen**

