

Tamar

Donkey Sanctuary

At the Tamar Valley Donkey Park
Newsletter September 2014
Charity No 1138221



On the spot reporter **Sasha**

Well its been sometime since I wrote a report on our sanctuary, this has been due to many things but the main one was tying Old David down so I could dictate this newsletter to him.

Old David has been up to so many things and making so many changes around the park. We hope you like the changes he's made which I will tell you about now. Due to the latest rules and regulations us donkeys are no longer allowed into the play barn to be groomed and petted. **Old D** decided that he would make the space freed up into a "coffee bar" and install "toilets" so that mums do not have to brave the Cornish "liquid" sunshine to use the toilet block outside. He spent the winter with the help of **Tony** building them, plus a new reception desk at the entrance. He tells me quietly that he has more changes in the pipeline but **Julia** and **Tamsin** have said that at 71 he should have a break.



We have had two donkeys mother and daughter **Dolly** and **Daphne** join us. They had spent the last 12 years just across the Tamar in Devon until the lady looking after them lost her grazing. The lady phoned the sanctuary in Oxfordshire where they originally came from to say "please come and collect them", when the man at the other end said "hold on a minute while I make a call". He phoned **Old D** as he knows him very well, he asked that instead of him transporting them all the way back upcountry, would we like to give them a home. **Old D** said yes and went off in "Brenda" the donkey box to collect them. They have settled in so well that they spend most of their time out wandering the park with our visitors. **Dolly** and **Daphne** must have had some "singing" lessons at some time as at breakfast time they sing outside the feed room to hurry the staff up. You may see a video of this on our Facebook page or You tube.

Well I mentioned Brenda our donkey box earlier; she has been well used taking mainly **Poppy** and **Grizelda** out and about to so many places I'll list some of them: Palm services, Plymouth Hoe, Nativity services, Fetes, fun days etc; at all these events they have a chance to collect much needed funds in our charity buckets.

Colleen has not been out and about so much due to her suffering from "Cushing's syndrome" which earlier this year reduced her immune system so much that she started to lose her fur and got skin sores. The vet had to try several medications until one worked, but it took weeks to finally get her coat back to normal; she is starting to look like her old (40 plus) self again.

Colleen & Freddy



In August we were invited by John Fowler Killigarth Manor Holiday Park to take a couple of donkeys along to help them celebrate their mascot's "Freddie the Fox" birthday. It was **Colleen's** first time out after recovering from her skin infection and she loved her time there with her best friend **Grizelda**. During the day they collected almost £100 in the buckets towards the Tamar Donkey Sanctuary running costs. We would like to thank them very much.

You will remember in my last newsletter I told you about **Harvey** the goat that did "high fives"; well we have several Duchy College students who come to do their day release with us each week. We have one most days of the week. One **Michaela** when she first met **Harvey** put her hand out and he butted it as a high five. **Michaela** was then frightened of him and every time he came near her she would put her hand out, it took a long time for our people to get her to stop doing this when he came near her. By the end of the first term they were the best of friends.



Talking about Duchy students we were so pleased that they all got top marks or even distinction. Julia and Old D were invited to the graduation as one of the students **Charlie** got "work experience student of the year" award. She was the one that always spent her lunch break working on her studies. The college also told us we were voted 2nd as placement of the year amongst the college students which pleased us very much.



This year we had two groups of "Children of Chernobyl" come for the day at the park. We let them visit at no charge. It was one group many years ago that named me **Sasha**.



Kimberly a Duchy student with **Daphne**

Earlier I told you that **Old D** had built a new reception desk, well there is one thing missing and it took us all a long time to get over it and that is that **Annie** our "dogsheep" passed away last October of heart failure, she was 15 but would always turn up in the office after pushing past visitors to get in the door for breakfast, she loved marmite toast and then to sleep in the office doorway as a huge doorstop. **Old D** says that she was a good age but he still misses her, but it was possibly a blessing in disguise as the bureaucrats when visiting to inspect would probably throw their hands up in horror and have a hissy fit to find a sheep in the entrance.



We will never forget her and neither will many of our visitors who still look for her when they arrive.

Old D had to use a strimmer to cut the grass in the car park for the first time ever this summer, as in the past **Annie** would each day wander down to the car park and graze around the cars, which would worry some visitors as they thought she was escaping; **Annie** had more sense than to leave where she knew life was good.



Punda is back to his cheeky self as a few months ago he was not himself and the dental vet diagnosed a tooth problem. **Punda** and **Gemma** as his companion were taken in Brenda to our vets "equine" hospital for a couple of nights. The vet removed a tooth under anaesthetic and that was a £700 bill **Julia** tells us.

As I'm on all things veterinary **Poppy** is doing well now she is outside most of the time and on wet hay if she has to stay in, which helps her OPD (like asthma) and the "sea" sand instead of straw we now have on the floor in the donkey house helps too. Last year **Pebbles** was diagnosed with a liver problem, which unfortunately suddenly got much worse a few weeks ago, she was treated with a special medication that either works or does not. Unfortunately **Pebbles** liver did not respond to the medication and we had to say a very sorry goodbye to her. **Pebbles** was one of the first donkeys here in 1989 as part of the first group rescued from Ireland.



Poppy & Grizelda out and about. If it rains they get straight back into Brenda the donkey box



As well as loosing **Pebbles** we also said goodbye to **Mary (Teddy's** sister) as her feet had become so bad that she spent most of her days lying down even though she was on a high level of painkillers.

Mary & Tamsin 1998



Pebbles

You will all remember the wet and windy weather we had earlier in the year, well one night we thought we were going to get a visit from Dr Who, but it was not his Tardis flying through the air but our field shelter in the top field which ended up looking like a "flat pack". Fortunately the park's insurers paid out and we were able to replace it with a better model, because of additional funds raised at the checkouts in Morrison's Tavistock to help us replace the field shelter, we would like to thank them very much.



Back in February we heard a very loud scream, it was **Julia** who had slipped on the grass outside the play barn. Next it was "blues & two's" paramedic, ambulance, off to hospital, operation and 8 weeks sitting doing nothing as **Julia** had dislocated and broken her ankle. For those 8 weeks we did not see much of **Old D** as he even had to learn to use a "washing machine", he jokes that he did not get the "gold" watch he deserved as he did not get to his 50th anniversary without using one.



Julia on Happy Gas



There are two examples of a different species of donkey in the play barn that **Old D** says are 99.99% safe and the only thing that came up on the risk assessment he did was that should someone be allergic to "fake" fur it might be a problem. Their names are **Daisy Loo** and **Muffin**; **Daisy Loo** has been here a few years but **Muffin** only arrived last year. He belonged to a lady who had asked that when she passed on he came to the Donkey Park so children could see him, the day he arrived with her family members they adopted three of us donkeys in her memory.



When our people took over the park in 1999 there was a Shetland pony called **Cherry** here, after a few years **Cherry** went to be a companion to a pony with a local family. Due to some grazing changes the family could not keep her any longer so she has returned to the park looking fit and well. She has settled in with our other Shetlands.



Sally our "animal care" lady with the help of Duchy students have constructed some new large runs for our rabbits and guinea pigs

During the summer we had a special celebration Sunday to mark the 25th anniversary of the Park opening. Lots of fun was had by all and we had the busiest day the Park has ever had. Another anniversary this July was **Julia** and **Old D's** 50th wedding anniversary, all we hear the staff say is how did she put up with him for so long!



Three of our regulars gifted a hamper to raise funds and others prizes for the raffle. The overflow car park had to be opened across the road.



Two pigs **Charlie** and **Percy** have moved out of Plymouth to live with us at the park. They had been purchased as "micro" pigs by a family who soon found out there is no such thing as a "micro pig" they all grow, as we know. **Charlie** and **Percy** ended up living in a garage and on some decking which was far from ideal.

Its been quite a year saying goodbye to some of our very elderly goats that were full of character and loveable in different ways but we will not forget; **Coco, Lianne, Fleur, Bobby, Sundance, Ratbag** and **Sandy**. However we did say a big happy hello to two giant rabbits **Larry** and **Sammy** who came with a smaller rabbit called **Pip**, and **White Rabbit** (that's its name) who came from the vets. **Fred** the ferret was found wandering in Callington and taken to our vets who asked us to take him in when no owner came forward. Three very young guinea pigs were taken in during August, **Pinky, Peanut & Mungo**.



Coco loved pinching toilet paper



Well you all know of the TV advert of a bank that's says their managers come out of the bank and work with you. I expect you have said "some hope" well its true as in November 2013 the Business Manager for the whole of Cornwall for NatWest came and did a days work at the Park. He helped build some walling of the new toilets, painting, repair outside fencing and met us the donkeys.



We keep hearing **Old D** going on about the "Gove" effect, which we found out was new rules on children being taken out of school for holidays. **Julia** told me the other day that our visitor numbers had changed considerably during term time, as we do not see hardly any children on week days in our sanctuary only adults. She also said that as parents now get up to 15 hours a week free childcare for pre-school children they are not visiting places like us so much.

Julia tells us that funds are always tight as everything is creeping up in price including our hay and feeds. Vet bills are another big outgoing and when we get an unexpected bill like for **Punda** it just adds up.

Old D and **Tony** go out and about with Brenda the donkey box along with **Poppy** and **Grizelda** collecting funds to help our charity. Since us donkeys are not allowed to go and graze the "outside play area" anymore the grass gets so long that **Old D** has to find a kind local to cut it. We did have many years ago a sit on mower but when it broke down and was not worth repairing it was scrapped as us donkeys used to keep the grass down. Now we are not allowed to cut it for him he is going to start fundraising to get a sit on mower again. We are looking at other ways to help fund our charity so any suggestion would be gratefully received.



Gunnislake New Bridge (900 yrs old) was closed for more than 2 weeks due to a panel van going through the parapet and into the river Tamar. You may have seen it in the media and the driver was very lucky . Our visitor numbers were way down !

As well a students from Duchy we also have some help from people doing their community payback. They have recently helped with their instructor **Fred** to make some concrete slopes, fix fencing along with painting and other jobs around the park. On there last day **Old D** always says to them that he does not want to see them back again except as "paying " visitors!



Us donkeys were so happy earlier in the year when **Tamsin** came back from the hospital and told us she had the 3 year all clear following her breast cancer, we gave her a big big eeyore.

Bethany who we have watched grow up from a baby has just finished her first year at senior school. She tells us she loves maths but her real love other than her horses and **us donkeys** is music and playing the flute, which we listen to sometimes when she leaves her front door or windows open.

Thank you once again for all your support.

From Beamish, Billy Bean, Colleen, Connie, Crackers, Declan, Desmond, Gemma, Grizelda, Happy, Jacko, Joyce, Kiltie, Paddy, Percy, Poppy, Punda, Ringo, Roy, Sasha, Seamus, Snubs, Teddy, Treacle, Dolly, Daphne and all the other animals.

To follow are some more pictures of life around our sanctuary and out and about

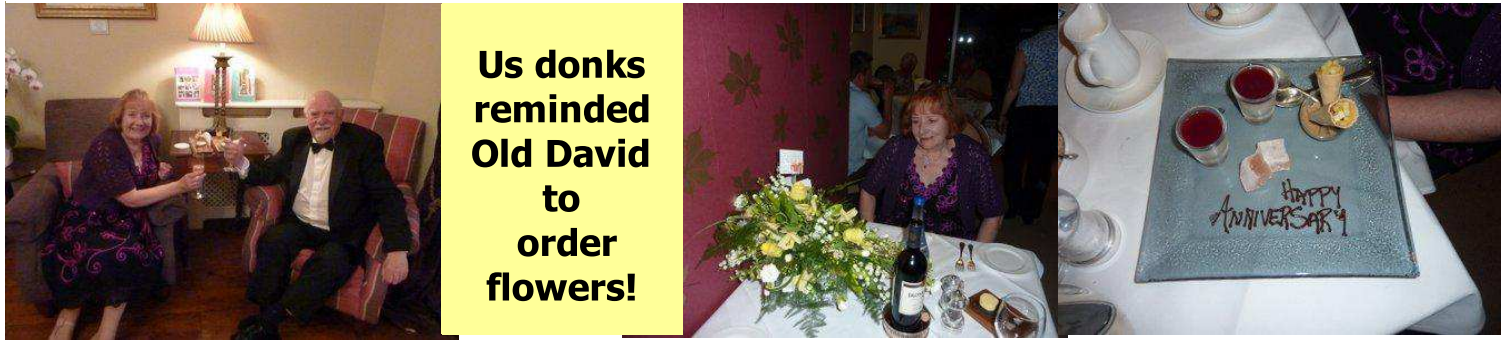




For our charity a lot of toys and books were donated to raise funds at our Christmas fare



We love the "sea" sand on our donkey house floor that's new every few months



Us donks reminded Old David to order flowers!

As **Old D** was busy building the toilets & café bar we knocked down the fence to get into his back garden to do some gardening for him!



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Time to go home now