



2021

Autumn Newsletter

After a summer of continued uncertainties ranging from Covid to the weather, it was lovely to be able to start welcoming back some of our visitors during July, August and September.

It was particularly good to meet up with some of our long term regulars who had clearly missed the donkeys and ponies as much as we had missed them and we were often humbled, impressed and overwhelmingly grateful when presented with 'saved up' donations and accumulated packets of biscuits, bags of carrots and various feedstuffs from a faithful nucleus who continued caring even when, to all intents and purposes we were 'out of sight, out of mind'.

Huge thanks to you all. It is true that we do see the worst of humankind sometimes in this line of work but equally true that we meet many truly beautiful people.



After a prolonged cold, wet spring and early summer we were struggling for grass with which to feed the animals, even in June, but thankfully when it did come through it came in abundance and we were able to get them all out into the fields again, leaving us to tackle the endless list of maintenance jobs around the place.

Sadly, some of our own land is becoming increasingly waterlogged over the years so we also had to invest in fencing off a section for safety reasons, which will be left for wild flowers and future planting of trees as, except for maybe a couple of weeks in a good dry summer, it is dangerous for grazing, as we found to our cost when a donkey mare was bogged down in the mud early in the year. Thankfully she was discovered and rescued before any harm was done but the warning was not to be dismissed!

DAPHNE

Daphne, a 2 year old filly donkey, has been our main challenge this summer. She was brought to us in May with an enormous and fast growing sarcoid on the side of her left eye which was already interfering with her sight.

Her owner was desperate for us to take her as he had two other donkeys and was afraid they would also become infected. Sarcoids are thought to be associated with the bovine papilla virus and often turn cancerous if ignored or are incorrectly treated.

Right: Daphne on arrival

Below: about halfway through the healing process



We were doubtful this one could be operated upon as it was so huge and close to the eye, or that the eye could be saved if it could.

On the advice of our own vet we contacted Heinrich Zeig, chief veterinarian at the Somerton Equine Clinic next to the Curragh in Co.Kildare, sending photographs and asking for advice.

To our amazement he agreed to operate immediately and was confident he could not only remove the sarcoid but save the eye as well. The cost would be €850.

With this information colleague Gail, who works here at the Sanctuary, set up a Go Fund Me fundraiser over the internet, telling Daphne's story and giving well wishers the chance to donate towards the cost.

The response was truly wonderful with many people donating from €5 to €100: we were overwhelmed by the generosity shown to this brave little donkey and we thank everyone who helped out from the very bottom of our hearts.

The full sum was raised remarkably quickly – a huge boost to our medical funds. To cap it all, Somerton Veterinary Clinic later waived €200 of our fee so our transport costs were covered as well. Another very kind gesture, much appreciated by all.

Right: the bandage we devised to cover and protect the eye under the fly mask.



We took Daphne up to Somerton on a Tuesday and collected her three days later on the Friday, all done and dusted!!! Our vet came the following morning to remove the packing from the wound, after which Daphne stayed on anti-inflammatories and pain killers for 10 days and we washed the wound daily with an herbal Thyme tea which is a natural anti-inflammatory and anti-septic. There was never any sign of infection and it healed almost while we watched.



Above: the wonderful Medilens

Being summertime one of the problems with any wound is infection from flies, especially around the eyes, mouth and any other area where there is moisture present.

We had a standard fly mask but thanks to Kelly Smith-Moore, an American friend and supporter, who bought us a Medilens Fly Mask in the States we had a perfect solution.

The Medilens has hard, clear plastic cup-like covers over the eye sections, attached to a snug fitting lycra fly netting mask. Ordinarily the front part of the cup is left open to enable normal forward vision but in Daphne's case, as it was imperative the flies could not reach the wound under any circumstances, Gail stitched a fly net covering over the whole of the left eye so it was completely protected. She tolerated it without complaint almost as if she didn't notice it.

Right: all gone and delighted with herself!

Little Daphne was (and is!) a star. She also tolerated our daily administrations without complaint until mid-September when we were finally able to remove the mask and headcollar and let her have her freedom.

There is no absolute guarantee the sarcoid won't return, as is their nature, but at least with vigilance we should notice and be able to treat it immediately, hopefully with excellent long-term results.



PENNY AND BRAN - BELLE AND LUCY

Penny and Bran were in an excellent foster home but sadly had to be returned as their foster carer had lost the use of their grazing land due to the sale of the property.

They are a lovely, quiet pair, one male and one female, who have been together for a number of years and are very attached, so there was no question of separating them into different circumstances.

Fortunately, we were concurrently asked to take back another pair of donkeys, Belle and Lucy, who were also in a wonderful foster home but for some reason Belle had become unreliable and was kicking out at her carers.



Above: Penny saying 'Hello'

Right: Penny and Bran happy in their new home where they have two other donkey friends

As there were young children visiting on a regular basis this behaviour could not be tolerated, so we decided to place Penny and Bran in Belle and Lucy's home, where they were made extremely welcome, and bring Belle and Lucy back to the Sanctuary.



Belle has always been a strong, wilful girl and little Lucy is easily intimidated so, although devoted to each other, it always seemed a rather one-sided relationship to Belle's benefit! However, all is well.

Right: Belle and Lucy



They still spend time together but Belle soon learned her place with 68 other donkeys to slap her down when she became too bossy and Lucy has grown in confidence, often palling up with some of the quieter more easy going donkeys, sometimes for days at a time: a perfect solution for them both.

Strangely, Belle has never offered to kick since her return though that is probably due more to the discipline imposed by the rest of the herd than anything we are doing ourselves!

UPDATE ON HOPE...

Several people have enquired after these two donkey girls, both featured in the last newsletter. Hope came to us with a raw, bleeding, rain scalded back through having no shelter against the elements.

The wounds were infected and incredibly sore so that, together with malformed hooves overdue for trimming, she was not able to walk except with painful difficulty.

By keeping her dry and the skin moistened with anti-septic, anti-bacterial cream, all healed over in a period of several weeks. During this time she rarely left the sheds, though as the weather improved she ventured out and eventually joined our old ponies Charlie (33 years) and Daisy Mae (mid 20's).

It was only later we learned that the only company Hope had ever had in her 10 years was a pony for a month or two during the summer. We have little doubt she actually thinks she is a pony and not a donkey!



... AND WILLOW



Above: Willow now

Willow, who arrived with seriously overlong hooves, wore her customised remedial shoe for several weeks with adjustments made during the process by Master Farrier Brian Horohoe, until in due course she was able to walk normally without it.

She has never looked back! She loves being outside in the good weather but doesn't hesitate to come in when the flies are pestering or during bad weather.

Both Willow and Star have made huge progress over the last months and seem both healthy and content.

Right: One of Willows seriously overgrown hooves



STAR

A pretty little 17 year old mare donkey called Star came to us with very badly damaged front hooves. Once again Master Farrier Brian Horohoe came to our rescue one evening but sadly the verdict is permanent damage, due to severe, untreated and chronic laminitis, coupled with inadequate, or possibly, incorrect trimming and balancing.

This has caused the pedal bone to rotate and sink; one hoof so badly that the coronary band has sunk causing the hoof to turn up and back in on itself so there is barely room for a small finger width between the band and the hoof, which was all but abrading the pastern.



Coupled with a back hoof that had curled under, trapping and compacting stones deep into the white line and the sole it doesn't take much imagination to understand the extreme pain she was suffering.

Brian trimmed the hooves in moderation to allow her time to accustom to the new shape and balance, then padded them underneath with a dentistry product which is malleable but hardens within a few minutes, sealing the whole with waterproof tape.



Star's front hooves on arrival



The dentistry product



After a few days the tape was removed and the hooves wrapped in iodine soaked Gamgee then retaped to keep her comfortable and infection free until the hooves harden.

The farrier work is ongoing, every month or so, until the hooves regrow and are long enough for further shaping, although they will never repair. Eventually it is likely that the pedal bone will push down and puncture the soles of her hooves, at which point there will be nothing more any of us can do.

With careful management this may take some time so our mission is to give her the best possible chance for the longest possible time with as much TLC as she can tolerate. Seventeen is still young for a donkey: certainly she deserves better!

Left: A much happier and more comfortable donkey

THE SAD MOMENTS

Little Nel finally left us early in the summer after nearly 14 unexpected years, most of which she survived through sheer strength of will and the most amazing, cheerful, attitude despite her disabilities.

Nel was brought to us very crippled with severely damaged front hooves and a conformation problem that bordered on deformity.

She always looked like two mismatched donkeys joined together with a much larger rear end than her skinny front end.



Her shoulders were pulled forward – a condition we used to see 25-30 years ago in donkeys asked to spend a lifetime pulling loads far too heavy for their frames. Yet in spite of all Nel consistently greeted everybody in the mornings, demanded her grub regularly and was affectionate to carers and visitors alike.

She spent most of her winters inside, snuggled up with other old and damaged friends, but come the better spring weather she took herself off outside and rarely came back in except to escape heavy rain or when the flies were a torment.

When she returned to the sheds in late Autumn we knew the first winter storm was approaching! As her teeth did not meet and wear normally we cannot be sure of her age except that she was ancient, so although a great loss, her passing was not unexpected.



Later we lost another elderly mare, Cordelia, who came to us via IHWT a few years ago. Her history was unknown except that she had spent most of her life with the travelling community in Co. Wicklow.

As with Little Nel, we know she had been bred, (a very large udder hardened with mastitis was a giveaway).

She was a gentle soul with great dignity and presence, kind, affectionate and stunning to look at in spite of a damaged and permanently swollen hock fetlock joint.

Both girls are remembered daily through striking blown-up photographs taken, framed and hung in our feed and storage trailer by Sasha Hutnik, who volunteers at weekends and whenever else her studies at UCD will allow. A fitting tribute – thank you Sasha.

LAURA'S GATE



Laura's Gate (s) (see Spring News 2021) were completed and visited by Laura's family and friends who performed their own memorial ceremony to commemorate Laura's untimely passing at only 30 years old.

They are a constant and poignant reminder to us all to enjoy each day as it comes, regardless of life's ups and downs.

ANASTASIA

Ana is a stunning skewbald donkey mare with a mind-set peculiarly her own!

She was with 6 other donkey friends in an excellent foster home but a couple of years ago decided she wasn't content with whatever grazing was on offer and developed a mission always to be on the wrong side of the fence!

Her foster carers adored her and turned themselves inside out to try and accommodate her whims until they were fetching her back from their neighbours' land and mending fences on a daily basis.



Ana was never troublesome in any other way and would allow herself to be caught and brought back without complaint, but an hour later she would be out again. Eventually the frustration and constant expense of fence repairs forced her fosterers into the reluctant decision to ask if she could be returned to the Sanctuary - no hesitation there as it is an understood condition of our foster homing that animals can always be returned in needful circumstances.

So, we set to, tightening our own fences, checking electric wires were working and having a gate hung at the entrance to the Sanctuary, that we could close at any time, but especially overnight when she could travel a long way unnoticed and possibly cause an accident to both herself and others in the process.

Visitors were wonderful, responding to our notice of explanation and consistently closing the gate after them and . . . Ana made absolutely no attempt to escape whatsoever!

She did appear to sulk for a few days on arrival and remained aloof and introverted for a few weeks but she settled without complaint and has since blended with the rest of the donkeys and become, once again, just one of the gang.

Our land, including all the rented land, is hill land, full of nooks and crannies, bushes, dips and rocks, small ponds of water and a bountiful supply of wild flowers and herbs, so whether it is that Ana prefers the terrain or she simply took a 'notion' at her foster home we will never know but happily she seems to be stable now and is a lovely affectionate girl whom we all love to bits.

FUNDRAISING THANK YOU'S

We have many grateful thanks to send to the wonderful and generous people who saved and fundraised for us through a time when it was difficult for us to be 'out there' ourselves.

These include:

The Ballinacfad Community Café who held a coffee morning and raised €500

Facebook Birthday Fundraisers gifted by Sam Anta (€369), Bridget Foy (€415) and Joanne O'Reilly (€346), which when added to earlier birthday fundraisers came to a substantial amount!

Aoife Hallisey for a very generous donation of €2000 from the sale of her father's house, to go to her father's relinquished old donkey Neddy Humphrey and all his new friends (see Spring 2021 news) plus several further donations every time she visits

Another €2000 from a lady who wishes to remain anonymous

€211 raised by Rihanna, Marian, Lana, Laoise, Emily, Grainne, Aoife and Alyssa who made and sold hand crafted gifts for the Boyle Market, overseen by their enterprising teacher Sophia.

Nathaniel Bulot who, for the second year running, donated his meadow grass for making 4 big round bales of haylage

Janella and John of Galway who saved their regular donations to present us with €700 on their first visiting opportunity plus sackfuls of beautiful carrots and a very large shopping bag full of ginger biscuits

Neil Dundon for his enormous help with getting and delivering parts for the Sanctuary jeep which needed major repairs but unfortunately landed with a man who had no interest in getting on with the job (NOT our regular garage !

We also thank Neil for many transport collections and deliveries and for covering home-checks—and to all other volunteers, without whose help we couldn't manage

Plus many, many more generous 'regulars' who left sometimes accumulated donations following a visit to meet the donkeys and ponies, others who donated horse/pony rugs, headcollars etc, still in good condition or needing only minor repairs, which we either use ourselves or pass onto the charity shop at Hungry Horse Outside in Newtown Forbes, Co. Longford to sell and raise funds and for donating feedstuffs, carrots, apples and biscuits.

FENCING

Replacing old fencing and making safe dangerous areas on the land have been a priority this summer, the major job being to replace the fence line along the roadside up to the Sanctuary.

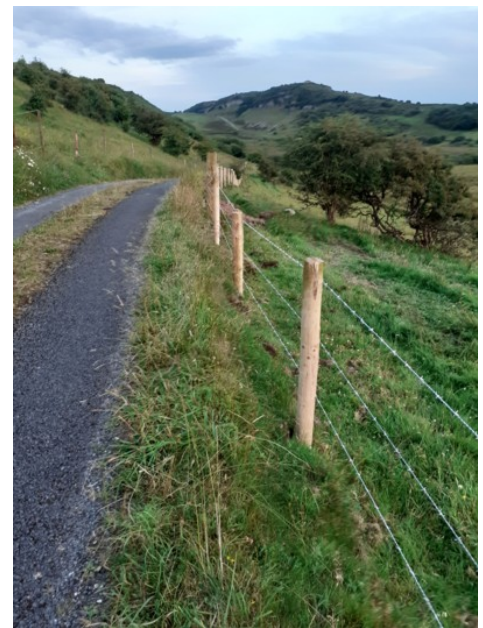
This is rented land, so while the money was begrudged in one sense it was imperative for the safety of the animals and for our own peace of mind. Donkeys, in particular, are real escape artists, driven by an innate curiosity to explore new pastures even when they have a huge area already and plenty of grass.



It was a difficult job beyond our expertise so we asked Dominic Frizzel, Agricultural Fencing Contractor, to take on the task and as you can see from the photographs, the results were superb.

We still had plenty of ongoing repair work to our own fences plus a couple of new bog holes to make safe one on our own mountain land and one on rented land.

Left and right : the old and new fence along the roadside



With the wetter winters we find the land is changing, so greater vigilance is needed to keep it safe. In this respect we also thank Michael Joe Healy of Riverstown who donated his time to dig out a ditch at the bottom of rented land to let go a build up of excess drainage water that was spilling onto the fields and creating a very dangerous area that looked safe from a distance.

Stepping on it confirmed the whole area was virtually floating, an insidious trap for donkeys with their small feet, which would sink immediately right up to their bellies.....with no way to extricate themselves.

Girl Power !!!

Volunteers Sasha, Geraldine, and colleague Gail, fencing the new bog holes



CALENDAR

We shall have a small number of calendars for sale at €10 or £10 each which we expect will be available from early November. Please let us know asap if would like one (or more) so if we do have to reprint extra copies we don't leave it too close to Christmas, when the printers get too busy to accommodate urgent orders!

FOSTER- GUARDIAN HOMES

Rehoming this year has been slow, with many time wasters, we think due largely to the Covid restrictions, but late summer brought a renewed interest with several now in the pipeline

HAVE A GOOD WINTER !

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