



2023

Autumn Newsletter

Our summer needs no elaboration: while most of the rest of the world complained of drought and exceptionally high temperatures our summer was wet, wet and wet again with only 2-3 weeks in June and one in September that could be called seasonal. Even so, temperatures remained stubbornly in the mid to high teens, topping at 22C on occasion, after a prolonged cold, grey spring that left us still feeding hay into the middle of June. When the grass came it came in abundance but for most farmers it was too late to be thick or rich enough to produce a satisfactory hay/silage harvest and, but for the one good week in September, which allowed for a reasonable second cut, there would have been an even more severe deficit of fodder. As it is, we expect it to be in short supply and correspondingly expensive.

Sadly, we have also continued the pattern of the last few years, bringing in far more donkeys than we managed to rehome, even with having to refuse many less urgent cases along the way. Mostly these donkeys have not been in bad condition apart from needing a good worming dose and their hooves trimming and shaping though only a few have arrived microchipped and passported, adding an extra expense to their rescue/sanctuary.

The main reasons for their relocation are they are just no longer wanted, often because they have no financial value, or their current owners have met hardship and cannot care for them anymore. With few young people now remaining on the farms, coupled with the donkeys themselves having no role except as pets, there is nowhere else for them to go.

DECISIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

In March, two members of the team unexpectedly decided that a future with the Sanctuary was not, after all, for them and left immediately. Luckily the prime role of yard and donkey manager was filled quickly by Liam, who had already been volunteering for several months and had recently joined the payroll on a very small part time wage.

He is backed by his partner Shauna who is currently still in full time work but who may choose to join us permanently in the future. Both are totally in love with the animals and have thrown themselves into the lifestyle and all it entails, wishing to learn everything about running the Sanctuary from the paperwork up, with a view to taking over when it comes time for yours truly to take a back seat. Whilst the paperwork with all it entails in modern farming with its endless record keeping, accounting and bureaucracy will take longer to learn they are already well ahead on the routine needs of all involved, especially the donkeys, horses and ponies.

Again, with a view to the future, we are in the process of changing the Charity Trust to a Charitable Company *limited by guarantee*. This means that as long as directors are available to govern the Sanctuary and meet its legal obligations the charity can continue indefinitely without risk of the present Trust being closed on the death of its main Trustee(s) and another new Trust having to be formed in its stead – not an inheritance one wants to leave anyone! The process is lengthy and fairly involved but safeguards the future

of the Sanctuary, giving everyone, including followers and supporters, great peace of mind. It may be the New Year before this is finalised and will effectively change anything except the title which will become:

The Sathya Sai Donkey Sanctuary (*a charitable company limited by guarantee*).

NEW AND RETURNED ANIMALS

AYWA and OISIN

Two pretty Shetland ponies, Aiwa (dark bay) and Oisin (bright chestnut), returned from a long term foster home when their guardians met with a combination of ill health and compounded grief due to sudden loss of other much treasured animals.

Right: Aiwa and Aria



Left: Oisin

As they were obliged to be away from home a great deal, for medical treatment, they asked for the ponies to come back.

The two little ones soon settled in, despite having been away for several years and have spent a good summer out on poor quality but dry hill land with 20 other ponies where they have enjoyed almost total freedom.

CHRIS AND HENRY

Next to arrived were Chris, a grey gelding and Henry, a dark brown gelding, both quite young and healthy but surplus to requirements, as again, their owner was elderly with health problems of his own and unable to find another suitable outlet.



Chris was a little tentative at first though he has since become almost as tactile as his more confident, extrovert friend Henry who not only adores attention but positively demands it! It is not possible to have a conversation with anyone else in Henry's vicinity without him nudging in looking for cuddles.

NALA AND AMOS

Nala, a dappled pale grey mare, and Amos, a dark brown gelding quickly followed. They were both timid on arrival having been passed from pillar to post under threat of euthanasia being once again surplus to requirements. Both were thought to be very elderly though as it turned out Nala is only a young mare of under 6 years old.



Amos is nearer to 35/40 but still strong and active: he believes he is a pony, choosing to settle with our herd of small Shetlands and small mules and despite several offers to rejoin the donkey herd is not interested.

Can you spot the donkey in the field?

He remains shy of handling even though kind and certainly enjoys a titbit (or five) as long as you are other side of the fence. He has good shelter and has gained weight. Looking good!

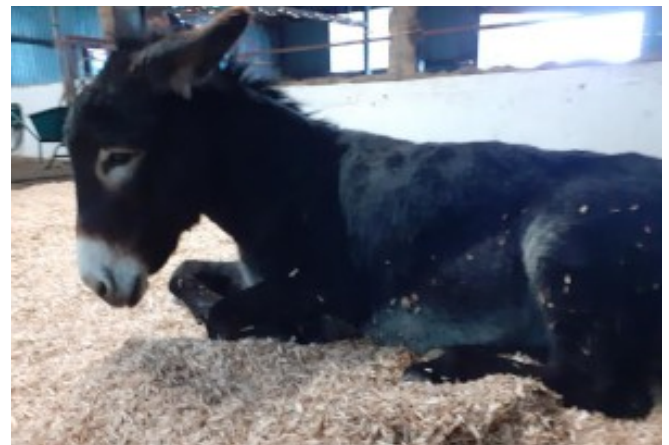
BINAH AND TIDDLES (since rechristened Nibbles during to his unerring habit of nipping the unwary)

These two came in through tragic circumstances.

They were dearly loved pets whose owner was fighting an aggressive cancer and wanted to see them safe for the rest of their lives. His grief at parting with his two beloved friends after being together for 20 years was heart rending: there is no doubt the donkeys miss him too.

Both donkeys arrived badly overweight.

Tiddles, a gelding, is a mid- brown roan, who as he is still active curious and gregarious, joined the main herd and exercised much of his weight down to acceptable standards throughout the summer.



Above: Binah

Dear Binah, a dark brown mare, is severely compromised with misshapen front hooves, one more than the other, so although able to move around well enough we feel it would be too much for her to be subjected to living in the herd.

Tiddles is possessively protective of her to the point where he gets no rest or enjoyment himself when constantly watching out in a herd: so a compromise was found. Binah remains a 'yard' donkey, living with the "oldies", enjoying occasional forays into a nearby field on warm dry days to spend time with Tiddles. Meanwhile Tiddles is just across the low wall of the shed where they can reach each other for chats and grooming. He is by far the more dependent of the two.



Above: Tiddles

On arrival, Binah's hooves were so badly twisted she actually walked on the side wall, almost on flesh, with her knees bent outwards. Movement was difficult and painful. Our clever farrier built up the outsides of both hooves with carefully measured resin extensions which had the effect of straightening her knees, which took much of the strain off her joints.

Subsequent trimmings have rendered one hoof almost normal though the other one will always remain malformed (she was probably born with the defect). To adjust the shape of the hoof further would create excessive strain on the rest of her skeleton and muscles, so is obviously not recommended. Her biggest problem is undeniably her weight as none of her joints can improve whilst carrying extra kilos and with not being able to exercise much we have to be cruel to be kind and restrict her diet. She does not appreciate this part of her treatment!

SCUTCHIE

Scutchie was born at his current home 13 years before and had recently suffered the loss of both his mother and a second companion donkey, so he was on his own for the first time: he reacted with anger.

A big, grey, overweight donkey gelding who had never been taught manners, he soon became unmanageable to the extent his lady owner became afraid of him (understandably as he was not for the fainthearted!).

We were asked to take him before he either hurt her or himself. It was a challenging decision as we didn't know how he would behave with our other donkeys but ultimately he found their feet as well as his own and quickly learned respect! He has since joined the main herd who keep him very much in order, soon learning that good behaviour is rewarded, bad behaviour results in the cold shoulder.



PAMELA

In August we were asked by the Department of Agriculture if we would accept a pretty little dark brown mare donkey who had had the misfortune to belong to two elderly bachelors of the old school who still believed it was ok to keep a donkey on its own and permanently hobbled (front foot tied to back foot) so she was able to walk around carefully but completely unable to enjoy any of her other natural freedoms.

Despite having been asked on several occasions to remove the hobbles and had even had them removed for them, her owners persisted in continuing the practice.

Pamela is only 5 years old, full of the energy common to all young creatures so this was an utmost cruelty, especially to a 'flight' animal who relied on quick reactions and speed to flee from danger.



It was once common practice in gone-by times to leave working donkeys hobbled overnight, especially if at a strange farm or grazing the 'long acre' (grass verge alongside a track or road), so they could be caught easily the next morning, but these donkeys invariably had company and were free to move during the day when they were working.

Pamela was in good condition, though her back hooves were badly in need of care. She was nervous of her own shadow, having had no experience outside of her own small patch. The first few days here she was like a toddler, unsteady, uncoordinated and completely unable to keep to a walk, running everywhere, leaping, jumping, bucking and skipping with the sheer joy of movement.

SNOWY AND YEATS

Following on quickly came Snowy an aged white mare with skin problems and her younger skewbald gelding friend, Yeats, again relinquished in desperation by an elderly, recently widowed lady who found herself unable to continue the farm after her husband died, due to her own senior years and health problems.

She also made the distressing discovery that nobody wanted donkeys any more so was at her wit's end with not knowing who would look after them during the winter.

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These donkeys had been family pets for most of their lives, used to a certain standard of care she wanted to ensure would be maintained, so rather than be offended we were delighted when we were interrogated about our standards too!

As the lady is unable to visit us herself she has friends she intends to dispatch to visit and confirm the status of her beloved donkeys.

Snowy's skin problem has improved but we don't know if that is due to previous veterinary treatment or maybe an allergy that has not yet been triggered here. Time will tell. They are a quiet pair of donkeys well suited to a smaller space of their own with another older family but we do need to understand the skin problem first.

PLUS 8 MORE

September saw us answering a desperate call for help from another widowed lady who had also had to leave her farm to return to Wales, UK, to live with relatives as she could no longer live alone. She had tried just about every rescue and sanctuary in Ireland, without a commitment of help, as she had eight donkeys to rehome in one go, six mares and two geldings.

For 2 years she had been allowing someone to use her 60 acre farm and paying him to look after the donkeys, feed them, see to their hoof care etc. Rumours had filtered through, however, that the standard of care was not what she expected: the donkeys' hooves were overlong, split and twisted and they had been shut inside the entire long winter last year despite having such a large area and open sheds available to them.

This a very unnatural lifestyle for donkeys who are nomadic by nature having originated in the vast tracts of open desert of Africa and Asia where they would travel in herds 20-30 kms a day just browsing for food. It also leaves them vulnerable to respiratory infections and fungal infections of the trachea and lungs.

The lady arranged for a local cattle haulier to bring the donkeys to us and here we thank a local man, Wilfred Burke, who very kindly offered the use of a few acres of overgrown grazing complete with pen, shed and water supply for a few weeks, not only for isolation purposes but to allow us to get to know the donkeys.

There are 4 foals in the group, now 3/4 years old but probably still attached to their mothers as they have never been separated, so it is important to us not to part bonded pairs in any future rehoming into foster/guardian homes. These donkeys are all passported, so as soon as we receive these documents we will be better able to identify the individuals and possible groupings.

REHOMINGS

We have several enquiries for guardian/foster homes, some promising, but so far this year our rehoming has been exceptionally slow.

DAWN AND VERITY

Dawn and Verity, a black mare with her equally black 3 year old filly foal joined Jirka and Waldo at their mini farm in Co. Roscommon where they are cherished; receiving much coveted individual attention.

Verity in particular is abundantly affectionate with everyone (except the farrier!) though both love their cuddles and we feel they are benefiting greatly from the intimacy of a smaller farm and their many and varied companions.



JUNO

Juno unexpectedly found himself a wonderful family (both parents veterinary nurses as a bonus) in Co. Roscommon, keeping company with a bereaved 3 year old gelding donkey.

Juno is a few years older and although mischievous he is a very kind nature, so takes the role of elder brother to baby Yoga: they are delightful together, totally bonded already, sharing field, stable, titbits and cuddles.

The family has also been generous in welcoming Juno's previous owners, to visit when they wish and were deeply touched by the response Juno showed to this first reunion. As he was rescued by them as a small foal who had been abandoned on the roadside in the middle of winter he no doubt harbours a profound sense of gratitude in his own donkey way and certainly responded with joy and affection towards them. A weepy moment for all!



SARACEN AND SHANTI



We give enormous thanks to the Power sisters at IHWT (Irish Horse Welfare Trust) who have taken our big 17hh, 4 year old TB/Clydesdale cross, Saracen, for training before sending him with the Blue Cross to UK where it is hoped he will find his forever home and lead an interesting, fulfilling life.

His dam, Shanti, an elderly bright bay TB rescue mare with various health problems, travelled to Arklow with him to see him settled as he has never been with young horses his own size, spending his life so far in the company of his Mum and two other elderly and very quiet horses. Consequently, he has no manners!

Once he has made friends with one or more of his own age, Shanti will return to us for a well-earned retirement with her other elderly friends, Merlin and Pharoah.

Saracen was born here unexpectedly after Shanti was rescued in very poor condition, from an abandoned housing estate build, and for people experienced in donkeys, small ponies and elderly horses, his size and ebullience proved too much horse for our skills!

As IHWT has, for years, specialised in retraining race and sport horses they emphatically have both the experience and facilities to train him softly so he remains unspoilt by incorrect handling. We will be forever grateful to this splendid organisation for their generous help.

SUMMER WORK

Apart from fencing, fencing and more fencing (all the fence posts seem to have decided to rot together, helped by Scutchie, one of our new boys, who makes it his life mission to eat his way through them), a great deal of extra work has been covered despite the poor weather.

The curved roof of the main donkey barn has been freshly painted as well as all the usual routine painting, power washing etc. Roads have been re-gravelled, a proper car park area established, new signage made ready for erection on completion of the new company, a barrow rack established under the trees opposite the sheds so the wheelbarrows can be stacked tidily when not in use.

A small timber tool shed has been manufactured from old timbers and pallets in which to store our everyday working tools of shovel, forks, rakes, poop-scoopers, brushes etc thereby creating extra space within the donkey sheds and best of all we have a long awaited extension to our utility sheds for storage of trailers, farm equipment, supplies and tractor diesel. The latter was erected to a high standard by Colm Williams, Agricultural Engineer and Construction from Gurteen, Co. Sligo who has been responsible for many of our larger agricultural buildings over the years. In order to accommodate the space for it a field shelter had to be dismantled and re-erected slightly bigger and stronger, in the field that is mostly used for overwintering the hardy ponies.

THANKS TO OUR FUNDRAISERS, VOLUNTEERS AND OTHER HELPERS

First we owe huge gratitude to all longer term and new supporters, fundraisers of all kinds including visitors, and to the varied team of both short and longer term volunteers without whose help we would certainly struggle. A few of the enterprising fundraising events are listed below:

Dawn magic - €210 was raised with an innovative dawn chorus outing organised by Adrienne Diamond of Adventure Gently who was joined early one misty May morning to canoe to a lake location and listen to the magic of the dawn chorus, by Rosemary and Eoghan, Charles and Mary Jane, Sive, Christina and Geraldine. The proceeds from this wonderful outing are much appreciated.



Bric-a-Brac sale - Two separate sums of €120 and €150 were raised at a bric-a-brac stall held at Cliffoney Country Market, organised by Mary Barry, Helen Burns and Katie Barry Owen, no small sum to raise from a miscellany of small items! Thank you all yet again.

Cake Bake - €150 was raised by two enterprising youngsters, Ellen and Neela who went from house to house selling home-baked cakes. They delivered the money themselves with the help of JD, a much loved elderly pony, on one of our rare hot June days. This is not the first time these two girls have held a cakebake on our behalf and we truly appreciate their efforts.

Left: Ellen and Neela

Secret Gardens - For yet another year we say a huge thanks to the generosity of Howard and Annette Preston who raised a phenomenal €540 for us from their *Secret Garden Open Days* at Ballinful, Co. Sligo.

Given our very poor summer it is credit due to all the gardeners that they produced such magnificent displays of their chosen genre of plants, and congratulations to all who chanced the weather and donated so generously.

Thank you all SO much!



Upcoming raffle with a luxury prize -

A complimentary gift voucher for a two night break for two people sharing was presented to us from Freddie (Frederieke Mc Murray) of Gregans Castle Hotel at Ballyvaughan, Co Clare, a magical multi award winning 4 star Country House Hotel overlooking breathtaking views of The Burren and Galway Bay.

The break offers luxurious accommodation in a classic room with a full Irish breakfast each morning, a gourmet 7 course seasonal dinner and a half day's guided walk on the Burren. It's value is just shy of €500! An amazing and generous promotional gift in exchange for only a little advice on an elderly donkey!!!

Other valuable prizes have been added to this voucher with a view to holding a selective raffle nearer to Christmas. Though the voucher is valid until 31 May 2028 we are sure the lucky winner will wish to partake of such a treat long before then!

We shall be announcing the details through our Facebook page for The Sathya Sai Sanctuary but anyone wishing to buy tickets when available should email us on sai.donkeys@gmail.com with the heading 'Burren Raffle' and we will be in touch.

And many others. . .

We also thank many others who have worked away quietly on our behalf throughout the year though to mention everyone here would take another page. Thank you all from the bottom of our hearts for helping us to help all these needy animals.

THE STORY OF DENNY

Denny, a much loved very elderly gentleman donkey was with us for three years before his COPD symptoms began to cause serious problems. It started with a snotty nose which refused to clear up either with homeopathic or veterinary intervention which included antibiotics over a period of three weeks.

He became depressed and his appetite was affected so our vet arranged for him to visit Paul Barnes and his wife Katie McAleenan at the Tubbercurry practice of Kilcoyne and Barnes, where they have advanced facilities not available to our own vet.



Here Denny was scanned, blood and faeces samples were taken and finally his lungs were scoped (a minute camera was passed into his lungs for a good look around).

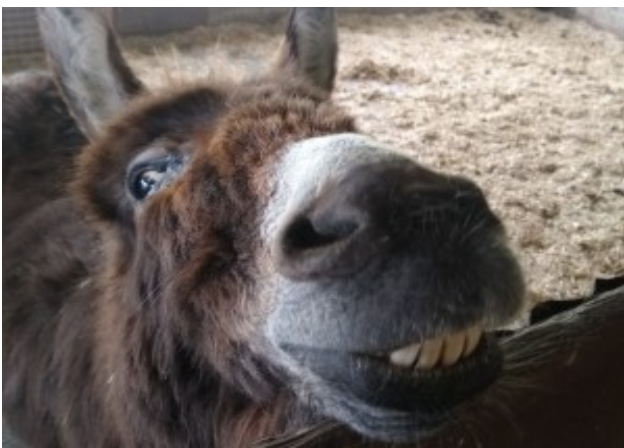
Sadly it showed chronic infection/mucous build up in the lungs and along the whole trachea (windpipe) though it was difficult to determine at the time if this was bacterial or fungal based. Denny was anaemic but had no parasite problems. He was given a short course of steroids, put on a bronchial dilator powder more permanently and did make a huge improvement for several weeks.

Then, one morning in September, we found him down and unable to get up. His breathing had deteriorated and it was undeniably his time to cross The Rainbow Bridge. The final kindness was to put him quietly and gently to sleep in his familiar surroundings.

Rest in peace dear Denny. We love you.

CALENDAR

Finishing on a cheerful note we shall again be selling our colourful calendar featuring beautiful photos of our own donkeys and ponies, mostly taken this year as a gift from professional photographer Hartmut Krinitz, better known for his superb landscapes and slide shows in Germany promoting Ireland, Brittany and many other places as a holiday destination.



Thank you so much to two dear friends,
Hartmut and his beautiful wife Eli.



The calendars will sell at €10 each (regrettably we will have to add postage) and can be ordered through our email sai.donkeys@gmail.com or by text to 0861031932 clearly marked 'Calendar', or if living locally by collection please.

Have a good and healthy winter!

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