

Devon Horse & Pony Sanctuary

SUMMER 07

There is so much to tell you that I thought I had better make a start on the News Letter. Having enjoyed a month of lovely weather with no rain, in May, we did begin to wonder if we were going to have another 1976. The grass on the lawn and the weeds in the garden were growing but not the grass on the fields. We started to worry and prayed for rain and when it did come, we wondered whether it would ever stop. In 1976, we only had the old racehorse, Venture, and his friend, Honey, not the crowd that we have now. I can remember dashing about trying to get all the outside jobs completed before it rained. The jobs were finished on the 3rd of May and it didn't rain until the following September!

Two kind friends, Clive and Sandra, offered to give us the money to buy a horse trailer with enough cash left over to put towards another field shelter. Roland and Darren, who knows all about trailers and anything to do with farming, went to Somerset to see what was on offer. They brought back a lovely new trailer that is big enough to take two Police horses. We were so pleased with this as our usual transporter who had a small lorry has retired. We can now do our own transporting. As it happened, that week we needed to bring Freddie back from his delightful loan home. He was keeping a pony company as her companion had died and the owner was waiting for her other horse to arrive to take over from Freddie.

Now I must tell you about the animals. We have been really worried about Onslow as he developed problems with his bladder. Ellen knew there was something wrong, as one morning she found he had a dry bed and not the usual soaking wet one. She also thought that he had lost weight. Kevin, the Vet. was called and he came immediately. He felt there was a blockage somewhere, probably a bladder stone, and, first step, inserted a catheter and Onslow, much to his relief, half filled a large bin. Poor creature. Over the next few days, Kevin tried antibiotics with very little improvement and suggested that Onslow was taken to the Bristol University Veterinary College.

We knew that this would be expensive as, apart from his treatment, he would have to stay for several days but there was no way we were going to lose Onslow. We had to find a transporter with a cattle lorry as a normal trailer wasn't big enough. Ellen came up with Anthony who was collecting a bull from Bristol and was happy to take Onslow on the outward journey. Ellen went as co-driver and horse carer. She said that the whole college turned out to see Onslow as they had never had to deal with such a large animal. The greetings were punctuated with remarks like 'Have you seen the size of his feet?!' The senior Vet. took charge of his care despite it being a Bank holiday, solved the problem, and he was brought back by Anthony a few days later. Everyone was so pleased to see him and crowded round, including the Police horses. They love him to bits. If anyone would like to help us with Onslow's expenses, we should be very grateful. He's looking well and is putting on weight again.





Another Police horse has just arrived from the Metropolitan Police. He is called 'Athens' (there's posh) but has a swollen leg, unfortunately a recurring problem. He is fourteen years old and very handsome and has settled in well. Barbara, who works in the offices of the Mounted Branch and who has become a very dear friend has always, dreamed of having her own Police horse but living in Chiswick and having no knowledge of the care of equines, this has remained a dream. However, Barbara asked us if when the next horse is due for retirement, it is made over to her, would we take it. Needless to say, we said 'yes' provided it was a gentleman horse so he would fit in with the other gentlemen. Athens came to Devon accompanied by Barbara. He will be her horse and she will support him and I've no doubt we and Kevin between us will see what can be done for the swollen leg and that it will be 'sorted', as the Police say. Such excitement, dreams come true.

Now, going on to Walter. So many of our kind supporters suggested wonderful names for him but we picked one sent in by a lady in Kent which just suits him – Teddy. We are keeping a note of the other names in case we have to re-name another horse. We knew he had been injured on duty and were warned that he was very touchy about that particular hind leg as he had developed arthritis and was likely to kick. When he first arrived, if anyone stood by the leg and just looked at it, his ears would go back and he would become very threatening. Within a fortnight, Ellen and Beth were grooming

Teddy from head to toe, no problems, in fact he had become very affectionate to everyone, even Kevin the Vet! Need I add, he loves Onslow.



We were told an amusing story about Teddy. He had spent his time at Wandsworth, and then, after his injury, was transferred to another stable as he would be coming up for retirement. By then he had decided he was fed up with being a Police horse so was put on light duties. Teddy's first assignment was to go with a lady rider to a Chinese Festival, which sounded like a nice, easy job. Well, when he arrived, a huge dragon breathing crackers and fireworks from all sides greeted him and, as they say in old manuscripts – 'He left the field'! We were asked if we could take him on the Monday and he was delivered on the following Thursday!

Terry and I are so pleased to have Roland, Alison and the family to help us. Not only are we getting old – 76 – this year but I have been diagnosed with Angina and Terry has type 2 Diabetes that affects his feet. The Doctor has advised that I would be a lot better and live longer if I lived somewhere warmer than Dartmoor. We shall have to see about that. We want to continue working with the animals and also, I like writing letters to you all and writing the news letters. Thankfully, in Roland and Alison, we have two people who love the animals and are happy to start slowly taking over from us and running the Charity in the same way.

We are very grateful to our Trustees for all their help and advice over the years, and Hilda Flint has graciously stepped down to make space for a younger Trustee, Neil Heasman. Neil has been a teacher at a local school as well as school governor and is now working for Exeter Museum and arranging school trips to the Museum. He is very involved with the welfare of children and also those that are disadvantaged. Roland is very interested in this type of work as he spent eight years on Child Protection before he retired from the Police and feels he would like to continue helping.

Two small Shetlands have now joined the Sanctuary animals, Rosie and Robin, who are quiet and love children. Robin is blind but is happy to rely on Rosie and just follow her. She looks after him and they are contented together. No one wanted them despite being a delightful couple. We already have several Shetlands but they are all hooligans!

Ellen, Beth and Darren are still with us and Beth is a great help to her mother who has been caring for all the animals single-handed. With the extra animals, this has now become too much for one person.

Something that is causing concern is the South West Equine Protection who are based at Postbridge, in Devon, and who are sending out unsolicited mail begging for help for ponies. Apart from the fact that the Dartmoor ponies are no longer in trouble and are not exported live for meat, their mailing goes out under the name of 'The Pony Sanctuary', not their own name, and we keep receiving angry 'phone calls and e-mails from people complaining bitterly about their methods, thinking it is us. In all our 30 years, we have never sent out any unsolicited mail and have now been forced to put a disclaimer on our website saying we do not do this and have no connection whatsoever with SWEP.

On to more cheerful things, we have a friend in France called Gary who paints and sells delightful horse and animal pictures. We have sent him various photographs of the Sanctuary horses and ponies which he is busily painting and has kindly told us he will send the Charity part of the proceeds of any sales. We have also entertained a local painting group, who spent a lovely day with us painting the animals and the views. Delightful people who created lovely pictures and they want to come again. I just kept them all going with teas and coffees!

Finding good loan homes for the animals is not easy so we only let them go to people we know. Just had a wonderful success story with Taiyib. He is a beautiful Arab who was really wasted here in as much as he is a very active animal and enjoyed being ridden and going out. He has now gone to a delightful family who think he is Mr. Wonderful, and where he will be ridden gently by 16 year old, Hayley. He was difficult to load but Roland persevered with him, took it all calmly and quietly, and Taiyib went into the trailer with no problem. Dear Hayley was so worried he may be stressed by the journey that she slept in his stable that night! The family send us lovely pictures showing his progress and we are delighted to have found such a good home for a delightful horse.

Our four foxes still visit every night, without fail, and appeared in a television programme that was made about the photographer, Richard Austin, and his wonderful pictures of animals. One evening, we had run out of chicken pieces for the foxes and as it was a mild night, thought they could manage just once. Terry got up at about 3.30 in the morning and found them all curled up on the rockery – waiting. He was so upset that he made them dog food sandwiches which they do like but not as much as raw chicken!

A Bristol newspaper decided to do a double page spread about the Sanctuary and the Police horses that live here. They sent a photographer who wanted the horses taken up to Manaton Green to make use of the picturesque background. The horses were very excited as they thought they were going to Southcott and kept prancing about. He took some excellent pictures, the best one being of Roland and Matthew with the old cottages in the background. Thought you might like to see that - despite Roland's embarrassed protests.





Before I finish, I must, as always, thank all our kind friends who support the Charity animals throughout the year and enable us to care for them and give them a happy retirement. We can put in the time but with so many animals, and a lot of them now extremely large, they cost a lot in feed and care. At the moment, most of them are at Southcott, enjoying the new grass and happy days wandering, with friends, over 17 acres of land with plenty of field shelters should they need them. They will all come back in September so, as usual, may I make my usual request for your kind help with winter hay and feed, and also the wages of Ellen, Beth and Darren who do all the hard work connected with them. Terry and I have now been relegated to 'teas' and 'suppers'! Roland and Alison deal with the website and anything to do with computers generally and Roland manages the outside work and gives help where needed.

We all send our thanks for your support and good wishes with the hope of a lovely summer.

Sylvia Terry

P.S. Two stories for you which I hope you will enjoy.

An elderly lady and her husband were filling in forms for their funeral plans. When it came to the choice of hymns, her husband decided on Rock of Ages. The lady said 'It's no good you having that, you don't know the words'!

A grandma was asking her little granddaughter how she was getting on in nursery school and said 'Does your teacher read you stories?' 'Oh yes' replied the little girl 'She's the only one who can read'!

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