

# Devon Horse & Pony Sanctuary 2006

# SUMMER NEWS

July is here and summer certainly has arrived. I intended to make an early start on this News Letter but there is always so much to do that good intentions have failed again.

The big horses have gone to Southcott where there is plenty of grass for them and have joined the small, fat hairy ponies that live there. All the rhododendrons and azaleas came into bloom but found the hot weather very trying and didn't last long but, at least, the bluebells survived in the wood. The animals are looking very well and we have had so many birds bringing up their families that we were tripping over them. The swallows are still busy with their broods. There was even a starling with its nest in the porch roof. Haven't seen any starlings for years whereas they used to fly in great clouds.

As usual, the jackdaws targeted Sam, the donkey and were pulling out his hair to line their nests, which left him with huge bald patches on his back. Ellen soon stopped that! She found a small rug, a heavenly blue in a fine cotton, so he now wears that. Needless to say, the birds didn't waste their time with Miranda as she won't put up with it.

There is so much to tell you that I hardly know where to start. Sadly, since Christmas, we have lost little Viking and dear old Rodney, the Police horse. Viking was very old, probably in his 40's and his legs started to give trouble. Our Vet did all he could but it was sheer old age. Such a shame as, despite his small size, he kept all the ladies in order even if he did have to stand on a rock to impose his authority. He did like big women and Tara was his favourite but, as a miniature Shetland, he only comes up to her knees! Rodney was something over 25 years old and had had a long working life with the Police and he was tired. We knew he was on borrowed time but did hope he would have another summer. We all miss him so much and no one could sulk like Rodney.



Speaking of which, we have had a very depressed Darren as our old tractor, which has given sterling service for many years, was wearing out and as Darren was hedging and fencing up at Southcott he needed a fully operational tractor. Fortunately, very dear friend in Kent had left a legacy for the animals and instructed her executors to tell us to use the money on something useful. In the end, I could stand it no longer, and said 'We've just lost a sulking Police horse and now we've got a depressed Darren' so he and I went off, there and then, to Bovey to see if we could find a replacement tractor. We were lucky. Small tractors are very hard to find but Bowdens had just what we needed in excellent condition so I said 'We'll have it'. You've probably guessed that I know nothing whatsoever about tractors but, fortunately, Darren does, and he was smiling. My father was an engineer, designing aircraft engines during the war and he always used to say 'If it looks right, it is right' so I applied that principal. Darren drove the tractor back and everyone is delighted with it as it can do so

many things and we can't manage here without one. I'm sure our friend would approve of the purchase and, amazingly enough, the legacy was the exact amount of money. Darren maintains the land and with the right tractor, saves the charity a fortune as we don't need to employ contractors. We also get a Government grant for work on field hedges to improve them for keeping animals in and also to protect wildlife by having cover low down.

Roland retired from the Police this month and he and Alison are going to take over some of the charity work so we've had quite a busy time re-organizing the office with a computer for Alison and another desk. Terry and I will continue as usual but try to hand over some of the work to them as we are both 75 this year. Terry is managing with his type 2 diabetes but the Doctor tells me that I've high blood pressure and a slight heart murmur. Thankfully, I feel alright and now try to be careful, but I keep telling everyone that had I not gone to the Doctor with a slight digestive problem, no one would ever have known so they can all stop telling me not to do things!

In April, Shirley, the Sergeant in charge at Bristol, invited us all to visit their stables. Terry held the fort and I went with the rest of the family. The visit was timed for the Sunday morning but we went to Bristol the day before so we could join in the celebrations for Brunel's 200th birthday - new lighting for his beautiful bridge and fireworks! I have to say the Police stables are very nice indeed and the 10 resident horses were absolutely immaculate. I wanted to take all 10 home with me. We were shown round by two young ladies, Laura and Sara, who care for them and their Police riders. Needless to say all 10 were very big and were matching bay horses just like ours.

The girls told us a funny story. I said to them that I wouldn't think they had another horse like Rodney who used to open his stable door but, apparently they had. His name is Dublin, which will no doubt be changed to something more Bristolian. We were told that Dublin opens his door, walks to the end of the line to see his friend, Dave, (I hope ! they don't change his name) opens his door, and lets him out, Dave then wanders off, and Dublin goes into his stable and eats his hay!

Last month, Roland and I went again to Bristol as the Police ladies had organized an Open Day to raise funds for this charity and also the one in Bristol. It was a lovely day and over 5,000 people came to see the stables and the Police horses and also the dogs from the Dog Unit. We had 3 puppies next to our stall who played and fought all day until exhausted. We were able to talk to people and show them pictures of our retired Police horses and they were very interested as the people of Bristol are very proud of their Mounted Section.

£4,000 was raised - £2,000 for this Charity, £1,000 for our friends at Horse World and £1,000 for the Dog Section. Shirley wanted to come to Devon to present the cheque - she had a huge one printed so the Press could take a picture of the presentation - and the Police ladies also wanted to come to Devon so Shirley

arranged for a visit. It was lovely to see them, they'd borrowed a people-carrier from the dog section with 'Police Dogs' written in large letters on the side, and one of the gentlemen riders did the driving so they had a nice day out. They were delighted to see their old horses, especially Louise who was the lady who rang 7 years ago and asked if we could take North Avon - she whispered something in his ear and he knew exactly who she was. Had we not taken him, he would have been put down as he had foot problems and was not fit for duty on hard roads. She had been given a week to find him a home. The old horses looked wonderful but I told the girls they couldn't have them back!

After a cup of tea and some carrot cake (our specialty) Ellen asked them if they would mind walking the horses back to Southcott - we'd returned them to Hillside the evening before to make it easier for the Press to take pictures of the horses and the cheque being handed over - they were happy to do this as it was a lovely day and they enjoyed a walk in the country. The 3 Bristol horses joined their mends Onslow and Guardian and the girls remarked on how well they got on together and how happy and contented they were.

Now, this is the funny bit. They and Ellen decided to walk back, although I had taken the car to Southcott in case anyone needed a lift. I returned to Manaton Green and waited for them and as they came to the top of the lane opposite and stopped to cross the main road, would you believe it, a car stopped and the people asked for directions. There were 6 Police officers standing there, in uniform, the most ever seen in Manaton and coming from Bristol, not one of them had a clue! They had to wait for Ellen to catch up and ask her for directions! We did laugh. It was a lovely day and we all enjoyed the visit and were so pleased that the girls, who care for and ride the horses, could see where their old horses live.

People have been very kind in raising money for the animals. The ladies of the Belstone Ladies Group organized a ploughman's lunch for the villagers and raised £455. This was held in the village hall. I was astonished to see the tables beautifully laid out, with a huge red apple on each plate, it was all so colourful. Then a group of lads and lassies from the local Young Farmers' Club organized a ploughing match that went on, day and night, for two days! They were absolutely worn out but, we hear, they had a lot of sponsors and we will receive our share of the proceeds which is divided between the Club and the Sanctuary.

Our granddaughter, Debbie, and her husband, Chris, are running in a Marathon for the Sanctuary animals, and a very kind lady and gentleman from Shaldon have adopted Clifton and Onslow and are helping towards their keep. I did, out of fairness, have to explain to the gentleman that Onslow had a very big body but very little in the way of brain! He is a dear and kind horse but not very bright. We are grateful to kind friends who send donations for the animals, used postage stamps, and one lady who knitted beautiful scarves for us to sell which were all the rage in the fashion world last winter.

Since my last News Letter, another Shetland has arrived, Holly, a very bright and pretty spotted pony - she quickly made friends but Lucky wasn't keen on her, he can't stand uppity women! Pleased to say that Lucky is still well, he was our first

rescued moorland pony and was bought for us from the meat man at Chagford pony sale in 1982 by the reporter and photographer of the Sunday Mirror. The reporter, Nigel Nelson, keeps in touch and comes to see him. We still write to many of the Sunday Mirror readers who sent funds to support the Sanctuary and to enable us to rescue more ponies.

Well, I think that is about all the news for now, otherwise this letter will never reach you. Terry and I are so pleased to have Roland and Alison helping us, I certainly know I'm not the girl I was and don't seem to get as much done in a day as I used to. I shall continue in the office, with their help, and also doing teas for the animals, while Terry deals with suppers and keeping the garden looking nice and full of flowers. He's also very good at writing and is working on a children's book, he also writes poetry - I'll enclose one of his poems. Ellen, Darren and Kay are still with us and we couldn't manage without their help. Everyone is busy with the spring cleaning before the animals come back in the Autumn. We are grateful to Carol for our lovely website, this will be re-organized and brought up to date once this News Letter is finished.

We send good wishes and hope that you have an enjoyable Summer.

I've been trying to find a funny story for you and thought you might like this:-  
An elderly lady, having read yet another story about a mugging said to her friend 'Do you remember the Blitz? There were bombs dropping all around us, and fires everywhere, but you knew it was safe to go out'

Sylvia Terry



### **Dartmoor Drift**

A foal is born, his dam so kind, And  
    he her greatest love.  
The rolling hills and he together  
With the shouting skies celebrate  
This lark, this pipit singing spring.  
Swallows chase the endless days.  
    The nimble foals play on,  
        No end in sight  
To cloud their days of grace.  
Now October mists the hills,  
    Sweet heather blooms,  
And thistles blow the hours.  
    A sound behind a hill  
        Fades on the wind  
        And then returns.  
    A sullen growl of engines.  
        Shouts!  
To claim small trembling lives.

*Terry Phillips.*