



2020

## Autumn Newsletter

This time we are starting with heartfelt thanks to all of you who have stood by us during the Covid 19 pandemic situation, continuing with your donations and fundraisers wherever possible and understanding our need to remain closed to the public later than many would have expected, simply because we have visitors at unpredictable times from all over the world and do not have the manpower to meet all the new regulations whilst maintaining a high standard of care for the animals.



We hope 2021 will see our visiting times back to normal but meanwhile anyone wishing to chat with the donkeys and ponies over the fences and gates along the road up to the sanctuary, is more than welcome (if they are anywhere nearby, the sound of a ginger biscuit wrapper will bring them trotting over)!

### SPECIAL THANKS

Special thanks go to four creative ladies who held online fundraisers through social media. Sam Anta asked for donations instead of birthday gifts and raised €327; Megan McGovern did the same and raised her target €200; Tracy Griffin raised €217 and Monika Orth €113, all of which is greatly appreciated and helps to keep the coffers healthy. Janine Feldman made face masks which she sold to raise an undisclosed sum which she intends to put towards our winter hay bill. Thank you all!

There are dozens more who deserve our thanks: Jackie and Declan for 22 bales of silage, John for making and replacing a broken window and sill in the little Information hut plus many other helpful jobs around the place; volunteers Geraldine, Sasha and her parents Peter and Deborah, Neil, Rebecca and most of all Stewart and Gail (who receives a small wage and works many, hours in excess of payment); Colm for going the extra mile to help with farm machinery repairs and agricultural jobs.

The list is long. Thank you to you all: apologies for not including everyone!

## GENEROUS DONATIONS

There were also a couple of very generous donations from people who wish remain 'silent partners' and we respect this, though it should be known that their support allowed us to do a 'make-over' on the little turn-out area, affectionately known as 'the sandpit' that joins two of the donkey sheds, a gravel area that extended from it which has always been a nightmare to keep clean in the winter months and a hardstanding area in front of the new field shelter.



We used a system of interlocking plastic tiles from Geo-Coastal, designed to bed into sand, soil or fine gravel. They have an open pattern which is then top filled with the same material and can either be kept clean or encouraged to grow grass or even wild flowers.

The resulting firm, dry, flat surface which can be cleaned easily and not dug up by enthusiastic donkeys at play is the answer to a long held prayer.

Later on, in the day we finished laying the sandpit area, we found the donkeys standing fence to fence, obviously giving the new surface their seal of approval!

*Wall to wall—or rather fence to fence donkeys enjoying the new dry feet surface*



We had a few tiles left over and have found them excellent for creating dry pathways through muddy gateways, wheelbarrow runs and dry platforms around water troughs. Anywhere to combat the mud of an Irish winter!! Provided the initial 'bed' is prepared properly we have found them quick and very easy to use and already have several other areas in mind for future upgrading.

## LOCKDOWN

Lockdown for us was a mixed blessing. It was strange not to see the many summer visitors enjoying the donkeys and ponies yet the plus side allowed us to get on with a myriad of jobs that have been outstanding for far too long.

The weather was gorgeous so we managed to paint everything that stood still, repair and re-fence many acres, particularly the boundary fences, groom donkeys until they should have been naked (but remained woolly just to spite us), install a new rainwater catchment tank, resurface the pathways, revamp the little Information hut (and repaint it inside and out) and concrete half of the 'oldies' haybarn in the main yard where years of wear had created hollows which caught the muck however hard we tried to keep it clean. The addition of some rubber mats for insulation and comfort, with bedding on top, guarantees a dry, cosy bed for the winter months.

We also spent dozens of hours spot spraying and pulling Ragwort, a handsome but deadly weed which has a slow acting poison that lodges in the liver and kills slowly and horribly over a few years. It seems to have been especially prolific this year.

The photo (right) shows a ragwort infested field which is highly dangerous for grazing animals.

Although most animals will not eat the ragwort when it is standing, they will if it wilts through trampling or cutting—or in the case of this field, when there is nothing else!

The quad has been in constant use vilifying our decision to purchase one even though it was a big investment for us.



Some trees were topped professionally around the buildings and one poplar which was leaning out over the road was felled....so plenty of firewood for this year!

Altogether it has been a busy but productive summer on maintenance and improvements.



## COMINGS AND GOINGS

We started the year with an intake of seven donkeys, five mares and two young foals all very undernourished. We suspected at the time that all five mares would be pregnant again as they had been kept with a stallion and three colts of an age when they would have been fertile had they been in better health.



*Kestrel, Jay, Finch and Mallow*

We named them all after birds to keep the theme started late in 2019 when we brought in the stallion and colts – Kestrel, Jay, Finch and Robin – who were accepted at The Donkey Sanctuary in Mallow, Co. Cork for their gelding operations (see our Spring 2020 newsletter), and didn't make it home to us until June due to the Covid restrictions on moving animals.

The mares we named Feathers, Lark, Bramling, Bunting and Song. Feathers had a colt foal at foot we called Falcon, and Lark had a little filly foal called Linnet. On June 1st Feathers delivered another colt foal, a cheeky little chap we named Chickadee.

As with all baby animals Chickadee is a delight. For the first few days of his life Feathers protected him from us all and even banished Falcon from her side but within a couple of weeks the three of them were together and now we suspect Feathers is glad of Falcon's dedication to help dilute some of Chickadee's endless playful energy.

The two little brothers are devoted to each other. Feathers is a wonderful Mum but as an elderly mare she also appreciates a little bit of time to herself.



She has plenty of milk so Chickadee grows while you watch and may even grow bigger than his older brother who is somewhat stunted due to malnourishment as a baby.

Song gave birth on 26th August to another colt foal, smaller at birth than Chickadee but just as lively—positively pinging around the place!

*Left: Chikadee*

He wants to be friendly but at the time of writing Song is still very protective of him so we acknowledge her space knowing it is only a matter of time before she will be comfortable to allow petting again. Or Pippit decides for himself that Mum is too fussy!!!

Certainly it is probable that Bramling is pregnant; Bunting looks unlikely at the moment and we are praying that Lark is not, as she remains extremely skinny even after a summer of good grass and we doubt she could support another foal so soon, if ever.



## CLARE



Small, dainty and only 18 month old, Clare arrived from the HHO Pound in early June and charmed her way into everyone's heart, including her new forever home family near Ennischrone in Co. Mayo, where she moved in August to companion another rather shy little filly donkey called Daisy, of the same age.

*Left: Clare*

*Right: Their newly built shelter awaiting a dry day to concrete the floor*

Clare is confident, curious, attention seeking, funny and very gentle so we hope she will soon instil some courage into her new friend. So far there is every indication that they are getting along together really well and enjoying their new adventure.

Clare's foster guardians are a couple with a young child who is already besotted with her long eared newcomers so we hope they all grow up together happily.

An unexpected home was offered to Henry at nearby Frenchpark when an elderly donkey died leaving his younger companion lost and alone.



As a friendly, gregarious donkey who is never happier than when surrounded by people, Henry seemed a good choice to help in this time of grief for both the bereft donkey and his heartbroken family, as he is a cheerful, busy personality who loves everyone, two legged or four and is not fazed by change.

Thankfully he stepped up to the mark and the two donkeys are already great friends – a comfort all round.

*Left: Henry soon after arrival at the Sanctuary monopolising visitors for their undivided attention.*

## LITTLE LUKE AND MR RUCTIONS



We had a sad few days when a distraught foster owner phoned to say that Little Luke was very ill and the vet had been called a couple of times without improvement. Ultimately he was diagnosed with a twisted gut, a disastrous and fatal condition (without immediate emergency surgery – and even then a doubtful outcome) that can happen at any time to the healthiest of equines, sometimes without any obvious reason.

*Left: The redoubtable Mr Ructions*

The sudden need for euthanasia left us all in shock, not least his lovely guardians and of course, his donkey friend Ambrose who, after a couple of days of solitary pining, became an obsessive shadow to Buddy the horse, who shares his paddock. If Buddy was even briefly out of sight the poor fellow became so distressed that outings with Buddy, like going for a ride, were absolutely out of the question. Buddy is a stocky piebald cob given to being horizontally challenged (polite way of saying fat) so his exercise is important for his well being

Once again a new donkey companion was needed but with certain criteria: he had to be small so he didn't overshadow Ambrose yet bold enough to fit in with Buddy without bullying Ambrose; and he had to be people friendly. Although there was question mark over Mr Ructions, who has a tendency to be aggressive when he feels threatened or disadvantaged, we decided to give him a try.

The first few days were certainly tense but thankfully the three of them settled down together and Ambrose is once again securely happy with his new donkey friend and Buddy's outings have been resumed. Peace is restored!

Watching bereaved animals over the years leaves us in no doubt that they feel just as we do when wrenched from a loved one through separation or death. Donkeys seem to be particularly sensitive to this loss and if left too long grieving and alone they quickly become depressed. Some give up completely and die broken hearted shortly afterwards. Finding another companion, or at very least giving them an enormous amount of love and attention, is imperative and whilst most will accept any kind of animal companion as better than none, in our experience there is little doubt they generally prefer another of their own kind.



*Left: the two boys settled in together and now great friends.*

A happy ending after all.

## COLOMBO

We had two happy rehoming this summer for horses. Joanne from Donegal, who already has an Exmoor pony fostered from us, paid the Sanctuary a pre-Covid visit and met Colombo our 13.1hh black Irish cob gelding.

Joanne had followed Colombo's story from the time he came to us as a colt from an emergency rescue in January 2019; when he was found dumped in Sligo suffering a serious and badly infected wound to a back leg.





Fortunately, and with thanks to the dedication of our vet and helpers, the wound healed completely and perhaps because of the enormous amount of handling he had as a youngster, Colombo grew into a fine two year old with a lovely temperament: curious, quick to learn and easily bored.

The perfect candidate for Joanne who was looking for a young pony she could continue training for everyone in the family to ride and drive.

Colombo is a very laid back character as can be seen from his reaction to his first saddle and a couple of weeks later to his first little jockey.

The other two ponies, Tinker the Shetland, now 38 and Brandy our fostered Exmoor, now 30 provide 'wise old men' pony company to the ebullient Colombo who's energy is constantly directed through the family's interaction.

It is a many faceted love match if ever there was one! Latest news sees Colombo backed and happy to carry the children around - it is all attention! Joanne has been onboard but is in no hurry to rush his education while he is still growing. Have a great life Colombo!



## CEDAR



Cedar is a riches to rags to riches story.

An ex race horse who didn't hit the headlines, Cedar somehow found his way to Ireland where he was accidentally discovered by our rescue team when they were trying to retrieve an elderly grey pony mare from a bog hole in Drumcong forestry in Co. Leitrim, where she had been stuck for considerable time in bitter cold November weather.

It was a fortuitous discovery as without question Cedar would have died overnight through exhaustion and hyperthermia.

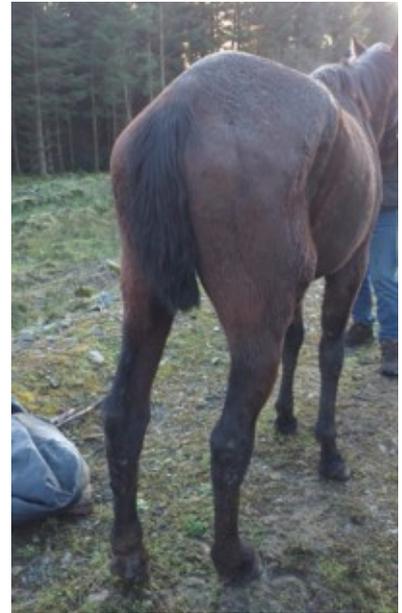
Although already soaked to the skin, tired and hungry, welfare carers Neil and Rebecca made a very late second 70kms round trip to collect the horse trailer from the Sanctuary and go back for him that night.

Fortunately he was waiting near the gate and had not already wandered back into the forestry so although tired and scared himself he was eventually loaded and brought to safety, landing in his warm, bedded stable just before midnight.

*Right: Cedar shortly after being pulled out of the bog hole*

From the condition of him we all thought he was a very skinny old horse dumped because of his age and many unsightly scars. He suffered extreme rainscald to the point where his skin festered and his whole back oozed pus. He was a sorry sight indeed. A dental check a few days later shook us to the core as it revealed he is only 4 years old.

Gradually his beautiful thoroughbred breeding began to show through until, by mid summer he was a golden boy indeed, standing a proud 16hh, glossy coated and endearingly affectionate. He and his new guardian, Megan, were drawn to each other: it was love at first sight.



Now he enjoys wonderful facilities with two other horse companions and a knowledgeable foster guardian: he is learning to ride out again and as both his physical and mental wounds are healing we wish him the happiest life possible.

Please look after our boy Megan – he is very special!

## SPRUCE

Spruce's story also developed over the summer months as after an extensive search his microchip number came up registered as a non-pedigree with The New Forest Pony Association. Further investigation led to him being traced to a riding school in England and several people who had known him then.

One young enthusiast sent us wonderful photos and a video of him in better days when he was riding out and competing in riding school cross country events. She and her mother came over to Ireland to stay for two weeks to reacquaint themselves and would have taken him home for sure had they the necessary facilities and finances!



We can only surmise that Spruce was indeed moved on and subsequently dumped because of his ongoing sarcoid problem, which though far from cured is under control at present and not inhibiting his lifestyle.



As his main carer Rebecca has researched helpful herbs and other sarcoid 'cures' in the hopes that his condition will prove manageable.

He is a lively, cheerful and affectionate boy in otherwise perfect health so we see no reason for euthanasia unless the growths become a problem to him or other animals.

He lives with Hickory, separated from the main herd of donkeys, horses and ponies to minimise the risks of flies transmitting the virus to any of the others. It seems that not all equines are susceptible but as yet the reason for that has not been identified and isolated. Meanwhile we intend do our best to keep them all safe.

#### BELLE AND LUCY

Sometimes our rescues are as much for people as for the animals themselves, as with Belle and Lucy, two beautiful donkey mares in lovely condition, whose future was endangered through the onset of devastating illness within the family.



This sadly left their owners unable to look after them properly, especially with the onset of the winter months, which just exacerbated their stress overload. They needed help and the team never hesitated.

We hope to find the girls a new and loving forever home when the time is right and their owners feel able to let them go.

Sometimes life throws difficult challenges into the pot and we commend these people for thinking of the donkeys' future welfare when they already have so many difficult problems to face. Our thoughts are with them.

## CALENDAR

Although Christmas and the New Year still seems a long way away early planners may be interested in our Sai Sanctuary calendar which will sell as usual at €10 including postage (or less if we can manage it!)

Have a good winter, stay warm and safe, and thank you for your continued support.

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