

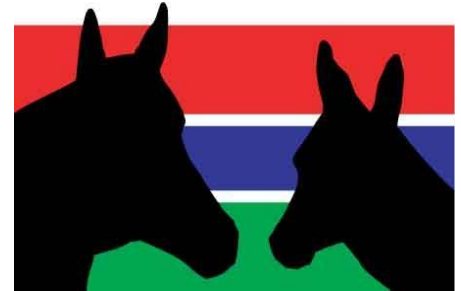
The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Fighting Poverty – Feeding Families

Registered Charity No: 1096814

Spring Newsletter 2012

Ten years of hard work and achievements, all thanks to you!



2012 sees us celebrating our 10th year of operations in The Gambia.

During this time we have managed to achieve more than seemed possible 10 years ago. We are proud to say that we are playing our own small part towards helping to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, to reduce extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. There are too many achievements to mention all of them here but some of our proudest include:

- Working with other charities to train 40 farriers and 40 harness makers and 15 para-vets with equine speciality, in conjunction with the University of Liverpool
- Providing veterinary treatment to over 50,000 working equines via mobile clinics and our in-patient hospital.
- Allocating or exchanging thousands of items of kindly donated tack, equipment and nutraceuticals to needy horses and donkeys.



Education is the key to change. Involving children in Donkey Club activities such as gymkhana games and Donkey ball ensures a good attendance and lots of fun

- Successfully funding and running vaccination campaigns for Rabies, African Horse Sickness and Tetanus.
- Providing 142 donkeys to needy families who could not afford their own donkey, under the closely monitored Donkey Project Scheme.
- Reducing the number of road traffic incidents involving horse/donkey carts through encouraging cart drivers to wear reflective clothing.
- In collaboration with TAWS hosting an International Veterinary Conference, attracting 82 delegates from 12 different countries
- Initiating research into the neurological disease affecting working equines throughout The Gambia in collaboration with the Universities of Glasgow and Liverpool. This has also led to us positively identifying diseases that were previously unknown in The Gambia.



Lazarus, the horse that inspired the charity as he was found, badly burnt and too weak to stand.

Our first ten years have been a steep learning curve and have posed many challenges for us, but our team of staff have risen to these challenges magnificently. Although we know we have come a long way we are also aware that there is still a great deal to be done. We are confident that we are providing the training, skills and partnerships to enable the Gambians themselves to meet and overcome the problems they may face in the future and we are constantly seeking ways of ensuring that our projects are sustainable.

When combined with the work of our sister charities, **Stella's School Scheme (SSS)** and **Sambel Kunda Clinic Trust (SKCT)**, we are making positive progress towards every single Millennium Goal and involving the whole community in our holistic approach to development.

Continued overleaf



Lazarus as he is now. Fit, well and the much loved mascot of GHDT.

Ten Years of Hard Work and Achievements continued:

None of our achievements could have happened without the magnificent help and generosity of our wonderful friends and supporters, volunteers, the other charitable organisations and Veterinary Schools that we have worked with and the selfless vets who have given their time and knowledge to help and teach us.



Children from a poor family with their 'Project Donkey'. The donkey is the key to a better future for the family.

Every visitor and student has taught us something new and we now have a really impressive team of Gambian staff, who are ready to turn out for a sick animal whatever time of day or night. In the region in which we have worked there has been a definite change in people's attitudes and the animals certainly do look better and suffer fewer harness wounds which is very encouraging.

We work closely with the Department of Livestock Services, the Department of Agriculture and the Gambian Veterinary Council and would like to extend our thanks for their help, encouragement and advice.

With your help things are definitely changing for the better but much more needs to be done and with your continued support, we look forward to the next 10 challenging years.

We would like to express our very sincere thanks to every single person who has helped us over the last 10 years. You have helped us to make an enormous difference to the lives of working animals and the prosperity of the communities that we work with.

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### Urgent News

### FOOD CRISIS HITS GAMBIA

### Urgent News

**There is a very serious food crisis that is beginning to seriously impact on The Gambia.**

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization have declared the need for URGENT support in areas of West Africa, including The Gambia, due to severe food shortages. Due to poor and unpredictable rain patterns in 2011 the harvest was extremely poor. This has resulted in a shortage of fodder for livestock as well as shortages of food for Gambian families. Numerous families are facing severe malnutrition and even starvation and food prices have risen sharply.

The farming communities of The Gambia are facing real difficulties and of course when the people suffer the animals suffer too. In order to prevent the crisis

from worsening it is essential that we keep the animals healthy, so that they're ready and able to work when the rains start again. If the present situation continues, the animals that survive will be in such poor condition from starvation that they will be unable to work, thus creating a downward spiral.

We are presently consulting with the Gambian authorities and other experts to find a way to help alleviate the problems. This may involve shipping in some fodder for the animals in the worst hit areas as a stop gap until the rains fall and the grass begins to grow. The animals are essential to the livelihoods of Gambian farmers – **without them the farmers will be unable to plant the seeds and harvest the**

***We are urging all of our supporters to help in any way that you can. If you are able to make a donation to the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust to help us give support in this difficult time, it would be much appreciated. We can make a little go a long way very quickly.***

## **Congratulations to Ann Varley!**

We are delighted to hear that long time supporter, technical adviser, newsletter editor, fund raiser, problem solver and above all friend, **Ann Varley**, has been nominated for **The Queen's Award for Equestrianism**. The award is 'For Outstanding Services to Equestrianism'. A previous winner is HRH The Duke of Edinburgh. Ann's nomination is linked to her outstanding contribution to training Sports Coaches.

We are thrilled that all the work that Ann does for so many people, not least for us and the working equines of Africa, has been recognised. On behalf of everyone at "Horse and Donkey" we would like to give you our very sincere congratulations and we are delighted that all your hard work and effort has been acknowledged. It is certainly a very well deserved nomination and we hope that you go on to win this prestigious national award.



The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust  
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[WWW.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk](http://WWW.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk)

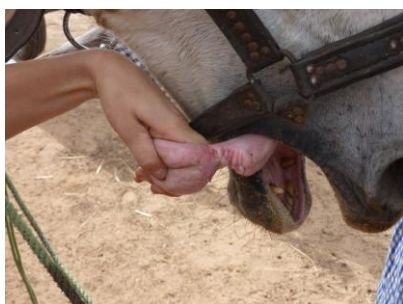
# How we use your donated items – Bits and Bridles

As many of you may already know, we are currently running a Bit Appeal, asking for people to donate 4" to 5" bits to help us to alleviate the suffering of working equines in The Gambia. The local bits which are commonly used are made from poor quality metal and are extremely harsh. They cause horrific mouth and tongue injuries to the horses and donkeys (see photos) and this often leads to a loss of appetite, malnutrition and in severe cases can even result in death. If the owner is unable to afford a bit of any kind they tie rope through the animal's mouth instead. Sadly, the way in which this is done results in great discomfort for the animal as the knot grows gradually tighter and tighter throughout the day, each time the owner tugs on the reins.



This picture on the left shows the 'local' way of controlling a horse and donkeys. Most have no bridle at all. Between this method of controlling the animal and a 'yank' on the rope to go faster, the outcome within the mouth can be disastrous – with tongue, lips and chin becoming badly damaged.

The picture (right) shows the alternative Sengalese bit with the ring going through the mouth and round the chin, in the same way as a very tight curb chain. The injuries caused prevent the animal from eating, but thankfully the injuries seen below are becoming less common,.



*The picture below shows a much appreciated donated bridle. Gambian designed bridles can include many varied materials.*



*These animals are required to continue working to enable the family to survive. The vets have to stitch the tongues and H&S staff help the owners with recovery options and education. It usually means the animal having to recover until the right bridle and bit can be provided thanks to our supporters.*

We are always in need of more 4.5"-5" bits and pony and cob sized headcollars. Our trained harness makers are working as hard as they can to provide locally made equipment and we work closely with them to ensure that we support them, but they still cannot yet supply enough for the needs of the farmers.

**Please ask all your friends, pony clubs and pony showing groups if they can assist us in preventing the suffering that we see above by donating bits that they no longer use.**

If you have any bits or other items of equestrian equipment that you would like to donate there are several ways you can do this:

- Send/deliver in person to Brewery Arms Cottage, Stane Street, Ockley, Surrey. RH5 5TH
- Contact us to inform us of your location to see if we have a collection point in or near to your area
- Bring your unwanted items to the Gambia Horse and Donkey Stand at **Hickstead** in June or July this year where we will have a Bit Amnesty Box

**The most useful items to us are: Small bits, head collars, bridles, girths, numnahs, fly fringes/masks**

## Sustainability?

We are very aware that shipping bits and equipment from the UK is not a long term solution but believe it is essential as an interim measure to minimise whatever suffering we can. We are currently working on plans to rectify the problem and are looking into a couple of possible solutions. Hopefully we will soon have a more sustainable means of sourcing humane bits which will also provide employment opportunities for the Gambians.



## Vetericyn Mission Accomplished!

We are extremely happy to tell you that Patrick Sells and Laura Heaps arrived safe and well following their long and exciting journey from the UK to The Gambia and safely delivered our wonderful new vehicle! Not only are we now blessed with a lovely, fully functional vehicle but we were also lucky to have Patrick and Laura to stay with us for 6 weeks to contribute their veterinary expertise. This of course also meant that they had the opportunity to make very good use of the excellent products which were kindly donated by **Vetericyn** and **Audevard** and the many kind sponsors mentioned in our last newsletter.



*From Newmarket to Sambel via the desert, the vehicle is the pride and joy of Mambala, our driver, who allows NO ONE else to drive it!*



It certainly didn't take long for Laura and Patrick to get stuck in. Amongst the many horses and donkeys that they saw we also admitted a patient with a broken leg, but this one was a ram. Colin, as he affectionately became known, was a friendly blue-eyed ram with an owner who doted on him. When he was brought to our mobile clinic his leg was swinging in the wind – his

owner was delighted when we offered to take him back to Sambel to treat. An amazingly good natured ram, Colin endured his weekly splint changes in good spirits and after 6 weeks was able to return to his owner, once again with 4 working legs.

Patrick and Laura made a wonderful surgical team and successfully castrated an older stallion, which had tremendously swollen testicles – one of them weighed over 7kg! The pain this was causing to the


stallion was tremendous – he had been suffering in this way for almost two years and his owner didn't know how he could help the horse. When Patrick and Laura agreed to attempt the complicated operation the owner agreed – he desperately wanted to see an end to his horses suffering. He rang every day to check on his horse's progress and was delighted to collect his horse two months later in perfect health.



Patrick and Laura were a real asset to us during their stay – not only did they contribute enormously to the veterinary care of Gambian animals, but they also mucked in with everything else that needed doing






*Laura with the offending testicle which was found to be full of pus. The pain this animal must have endured must have been excruciating.*



### Discover the river!

- Adventure & wildlife holidays off-the-beaten-track
- 550 species of birds + hippos, monkeys & chimps
- New eco-friendly solar-powered boat!

Prices from:  
**7 nights £525**  
**14 nights £759**  
Excludes flight (typically £250 - £400)

Visit [www.hiddengambia.com](http://www.hiddengambia.com) for further info

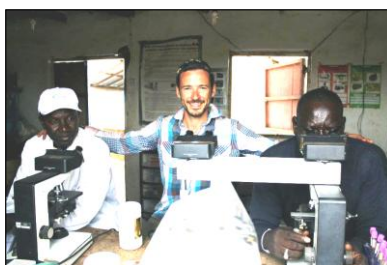
whether it be painting stables, teaching the staff, doing the weekly food shopping in the chaotic markets or getting up through the night to bottle feed a baby goat! They worked tirelessly throughout the show day, collecting blood samples from every animal to test for trypanosomes in order to continue the essential research in this area, and even when Patrick became quite ill with malaria it was a job to stop him from working! With their great work ethic and brilliant sense of humour they were a real joy to have staying with us in Sambel Kunda



**We would like to say a HUGE thank you to everyone involved in helping to make Pat and Laura's trip possible. It is fantastic to have our new vehicle and thanks to everyone who supported and sponsored this trip. Special thanks to Vetericyn, the main sponsors of the trip, and also to Neil White of TW White and Sons for helping us to source the vehicle. Most importantly thank you so much to Patrick and Laura – your hard and dedicated work is very much appreciated and we wish you both every success in your new and exciting endeavours**

*Sambel may be far from home and 'out in the bush' but we have within it an centre of excellence which can offer a veterinary service of increasing quality. Miracles are seen to happen every day.*

*Our own staff benefit from the expertise of so many amazing people, with the vet schools and equine specialist practices sending out their staff for continuing professional development. They all bring with them not only their expertise and enthusiasm but plenty of donated 'goodies'. These trips not only open up opportunities and expand knowledge but also enable us to treat a wider range of conditions than we ever thought possible.. **We thank you all.** The expertise of the Sambel team which makes things sustainable is very much thanks to you .*



### **The Gambian Neuro disease takes Lion**

It is with great sadness that we learnt that "Lion", who was for 3 years the supreme champion at our show and who was a real credit to the family who owned him, died earlier in the year as a result of the dreadful neurological disease that we are trying to get to grips with. He was euthanized before the symptoms progressed. Lion worked hard, but was well cared for and well fed. His family genuinely cared for him, so much so that he was buried within the family compound as a mark of respect. Our sympathies go to this very special family who showed everyone that Gambian horses can be well loved, respected and cared for. Through his owner's example, his village has set the standard for everyone else to follow. Their many friends will be pleased to know that Little Lazarus has now been loaned to this family until Lion's son is old enough to take over duties.





## Celebrating the Changes – A visiting volunteer vet recognised progress

**A**fter returning from The Gambia in January, Heather asked if I would write a short piece for the newsletter about the changes that I have noticed in GHDT since the charity first started working 10 years ago.

It felt like a time warp in my memory - the first trip I made was in 2002, with a group of exceedingly enthusiastic and hilarious vets and nurses organised by **Worldwide Veterinary Services**. We had no idea what to expect and I am not sure what the Gambians would have made of us. The phrase “get stuck in” sums it up - and I have memories of our lovely minibus parked in a lumo (market) with us attempting to treat whatever came our way.

The problems we saw shocked and motivated us to continue to support this great charity - horses with tongues amputated by the inappropriate bits, unbelievable wounds, small children beating tired donkeys and thin miserable horses clearly dying of trypanosome infections while being made to work in harness.

We stayed in a rudimentary (but idyllic) camp and showered under a bucket; everything was embryonic.

Fast forward to 2008 and Heather is busily organising a comprehensive animal health assistant training programme with the expertise of several eminent UK veterinary surgeons, The University of Liverpool and the Gambia College. These first graduates proudly graduated in 2010, and I was once again able to return (briefly) to attend the graduation ceremony and the conference that coincided with this. This time accompanying my mother (age 78) who had sponsored a graduate and was there to see the results!

Then in early 2012 the urge to go back and do something more was fulfilled. This time I was with my colleague and friend Sue Devereux an equine acupuncture and chiropractic veterinary specialist.

What a transformation – up at Sambel Kunda is accommodation for the manager and visitors/volunteers (flushing loos!), a yard with insect proof stables, a laboratory, well trained local staff to look after in patients and attend sick patients. A planned programme of educational activities, bit exchanges, market visits, shows, and events.

How do these factors impact on the equines? Well it is an amazing achievement to see people bringing their horses and donkeys for treatment and being willing to pay for it (small amounts but it shows they value the service). The horses looked visibly fitter and carried more condition. If affected by trypanosomes there is now an option of a diagnosis and treatment available locally. We only saw one tongue lesion and the horse's owner was keen for treatment. Sick equines can be hospitalised and given care and respect while they recuperate.

*Alex treating a damaged tongue.. Welfare education and having a sustainable and affordable source of humane bits will be the answer to this problem,*



Perhaps the most heart-warming experience was watching children training for the next “donkey-ball” match, on shiny fit donkeys and clearly enjoying the relationship between themselves and their donkeys. The donkeys are transformed from beasts of burden and abuse to partners in competitive games and brief heroes in their owner's lives.

It is hard to list all the achievements GHDT has wrought in a short decade - which range from the practical - a donkey foster/loan scheme for poor families, to the highly theoretical - researching the cause of a nervous system disorder which has caused so many terrible symptoms, leading to inevitable death, with top universities in the UK.

However there is an equally long list of things that still need to happen for GHDT to reach out to more equines, all of which will need many more volunteers, much more funding and definitely another visit or two in the future! *Alex Thiemann*

### Are you a Vet who would like to Volunteer with us?

We are always on the look-out for hard working, open minded volunteer vets to come out and help us in The Gambia. Are you looking to widen your horizons and experience new things? If you feel you may be able to help us please email Anna at [anna\\_ghdt@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:anna_ghdt@hotmail.co.uk) who will be able to provide you with all the information about carrying out a volunteer placement

Unfortunately we are only able to offer voluntary placements to qualified vets with a minimum of one year's experience of working in practice. Volunteering with us can be an extremely rewarding and eye-opening experience and vets who have worked with us have told us they have gained two years experience in two weeks!

Please contact Anna if you would like any further information.

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Heather Armstrong, Brewery Arms Cottage Stane Street, Ockley, Surrey RH5 5TH

Tel: 01306 627568 Email: [heather@gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk](mailto:heather@gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk) WWW: [gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk](http://gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk)



### The Donkey School Bus

Thanks to TAWS, work on the donkey school bus is well underway and we hope soon to have the prototype ready. Not only will it have the collective knowledge and experience of the TAWS members behind it, but they have also enlisted the help of **Bugatti** for some of the design features. We are really excited to see the vehicle made up and we may be unable to resist painting on racing stripes! Sincere thanks to **TAWS** and to **Bugatti** for their kind and generous assistance with this project.

### Just Text Giving

We are now able to receive donations by text which means you can literally donate on the run, for the simple cost of a text! We get the full amount that you donate, and we can even claim Gift Aid from the donation if you are a UK Tax payer.

To donate simply text GHDT01 followed by the amount you would like to donate to 70070.

For example, if you would like to donate £10 just **text GHDT01 £10 to 70070**.

It really is that simple and straight forward! Thank you to everyone who has already sent a donation to us by text – it is very much appreciated.

## Harness training



This year we are planning to really focus hard on prevention of harness injuries and with our trained harness makers we are planning to hold workshops for the farmers. We need to emphasise the benefits of good, well fitting harness and the use of breeching and swingle trees.

The local television station made a programme of our show at Christmas and it proved so popular that there were requests for a repeat showing. This demonstrated to us the power of television and we have plans later in the year to make a couple of documentary films to be shown on Gambian television.



This project will require considerable logistical planning, but we are immensely grateful to **The Donkey Sanctuary** for their grant, **David and Sue Hewittson Brown**, who consulted with **Ramsay Hovell of TAWS** and then had 100 beautiful swingle trees made up to help us kick start the project. Thanks also to **Ann Varley**, who will be supervising training and explaining and to the Gambian harness makers who are working hard to ensure that we have sufficient equipment for the workshops.

## **Come and visit us!**

One of our past volunteers, Alex Coombs has set up a Visitor Lodge in a neighbouring village. This is quite close to our centre and offers a more peaceful, holiday opportunity for somewhere to stay. To contact Alex please visit her website [www.gambiaaccommodation.co.uk](http://www.gambiaaccommodation.co.uk) Communications to upcountry Gambia can be a little slow at times so be patient! If you need to contact Alex urgently speak to Heather, who will ask someone from Horse and Donkey to take a message when they are passing.

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust  
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[WWW.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk](http://WWW.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk)

## Have you been wondering what to do with the scrap car cluttering up your driveway?



Well wonder no more – it can be transformed into cash for the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust!

We have now joined up with Giveacar, a non-profit social enterprise which collects unwanted and unused cars for charity – turning scrap into cash. Regardless of their condition, cars are collected **free-of-charge** nationwide by Giveacar then sold through an online auction or disposed of at an authorised treatment facility.

profits from the sale are then donated to a charity of the car owner's choice. Even if the banger is scrapped, it still nets the selected good cause between £40 and £160.

Many car owners want an easy and completely free way to get rid of their old car. Giveacar will help them to do this in a legal and environmentally friendly way.

All you have to do is go to the website and organise for [giveacar.co.uk](http://giveacar.co.uk) to come and collect your car. Then you nominate which charity you would like to benefit from your scrap car (Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust of course!), and that is it. Simple.

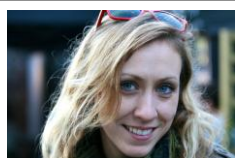
❖ To get more details and start making a difference, please visit [www.giveacar.co.uk](http://www.giveacar.co.uk) or call the Giveacar Team on 020 0011 1664, quoting **Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust** as your chosen charity.

❖ If you are ready immediately to donate your car, please go to <http://giveacar.co.uk/charities/gambia-horse-and-donkey-trust> and fill out the donation form.

Thank you

### Fundraising Events

Are you planning a fundraising event in aid of Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust this year? If so, we would LOVE to hear about it! Please do contact us to let us know about your event so that we can help you to publicise the event and do what we can to help make your event a success. Get it on Facebook and advertised on the webpage.



### Please encourage Adele in her efforts to help us!

Adele Williams is a vet who has been very kind to us and has offered her services to us on a voluntary basis out in The Gambia. Despite having already given up so much of her time for us she has decided to go one step further and put herself through a strenuous physical challenge on behalf of us! Adele will be taking part in the Great North Swim in June, where she will swim one mile in a very cold lake in the Lake District! Adele is currently training hard for this event and would love some extra encouragement through sponsorship if anyone can spare a few pounds for her immense efforts! **If you would like to sponsor Adele please visit: [www.justgiving.com](http://www.justgiving.com) and look for 'Adele's Grrrrreat North Swim 2012'**

### Would you consider a gift to the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust in Your Will?

*A legacy is a gift of money, property or possessions left in your will. If you decide to give to a charity, the gift is tax-free and now there can be tax benefits as well.*

*Please consider a gift in your will to the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust, which will enable us to continue our work of alleviating the suffering of working equines in The Gambia, and reducing the poverty of the animal's owners. Legacies are extremely important in making it possible for us to continue the essential work that we are carrying out and every gift left to us is hugely valued and appreciated. A gift of any size will help to improve the lives of working equines and the families that depend on them.*

*Leaving a gift in your will is not as difficult as you might think and offers you peace of mind knowing that you have taken care of a cause close to your heart.*

*For more information about leaving a gift to the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust in your Will please visit our website ([www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk](http://www.gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk)) and go to the 'How You Can Help' page where you will find all the information required. Alternatively, if you have any enquiries please contact our office by email, telephone or post.*



*giftaid it*

**Gift Aid declaration – for  
past, present & future  
donations**

**The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust**

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made

Today ☐ in the past 4 years ☐ in the future ☐

Please tick all boxes you wish to apply.

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April to 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 28p of tax on every £1 that I gave up to 5 April 2008 and will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008.

**Donor's details**

Title ----- First name or initial(s) -----

Surname -----

Full home address -----

-----

Postcode -----

Date -----

Signature -----

***Please notify the charity if you:***

*Want to cancel this declaration*

*Change your name or home address*

*No longer pay sufficient tax on your income and/or capital gains.*

*If you pay Income Tax at the higher or additional rate and want to receive the additional tax relief due to you, you must include all your Gift Aid donations on your Self Assessment tax return or ask HM Revenue and Customs to adjust your tax code.*