

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust

Fighting Poverty – Feeding Families

Registered Charity No: 1096814

Spring Newsletter 2016



GHDT CHARITY DIRECTOR WINS PETPLAN ANIMAL CHARITY AWARD 2016



The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust is delighted to announce that their Charity Director, Heather Armstrong, has won the Petplan Animal Charity Volunteer Award for 2016. This is truly a fantastic achievement as this year the awards received over 6,300 nominations in total.

For those of you who are unfamiliar with the history of The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust, it was set up in 2002 by two British sisters, Stella Marsden and the charity's director Heather Armstrong, who were concerned for both the animals and their owners. Heather was dealt an enormous blow in 2008 with the untimely death of Stella. She works voluntarily to provide help to the thousands of

equines in The Gambia and to try to alleviate not only their suffering but also the hardship of their owners. The Gambia is one of the poorest countries in West Africa and without the animals that are used for farming and transport, families find it extremely difficult to earn a living. It has been estimated that a healthy working equine can increase its family's income by 500%.

Heather has had a long association with The Gambia as her parents moved there when she was three years old and she has a great love for the country. She travels there regularly to monitor the running of the charity's facilities, support the regular workshops that are held there as well as to supervise the building of a new centre closer to the coast. When back in the UK she works hard trying to raise awareness and funding for her causes. She is a passionate animal lover with a veterinary background after a career in veterinary nursing and she shares her life in the UK with dogs, donkeys, goats, llamas and alpacas.

Heather was absolutely stunned when she received the call to say she had been nominated for the Petplan award and was a finalist. "I am really grateful to the person who nominated me but I can think of a lot of far more worthy winners than me. One of the perks of the job is that you do meet some really inspiring people in this field of work. The best moments are when you see an animal in a critical state and with a poor prognosis start to recover, or a really closed down animal respond to you for the first time. The other highs are the certificate awards at the end of the training sessions, when you know that there is going to be more help circulating in the communities for the animals and their owners."

The charity is heavily dependent on volunteers as no one except the Gambian staff and one part time administrator receives a salary, so a great deal is achieved with very little money. The many veterinary volunteers who visit the centre have helped to train the Gambian staff to an outstanding level of competence and they frequently achieve outstanding results. The charity is now looking forward to its next phase of building Gambian veterinary capacity so that farmers all over the country will be able to access help for their animals.

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OUR STAFF AT WORK



Just as we went to press we heard the sad news that a very dear friend to GHDT, Jim Richards, had passed away. On behalf of all at GHDT we would like to extend our heartfelt condolences to his wife Wendy and to his family. His kindness, humour and generosity of spirit will be sadly missed. Rest in Peace Jim.

JAN THE DONKEY RETURNS TO GHDT



Jan with his former carer

We think the powerful emotional bonds that animals form with each other and with their humans are seriously underestimated, this is particularly true with donkeys. Recently, most unusually, we were asked to take back a project donkey named Jan who had become seriously unmanageable. Project donkeys are given to families too poor to buy their own donkey though they are still owned by GHDT and receive regular welfare checks.

We were curious to find out why his behaviour had changed as Jan had gone to his family almost nine years ago and had been as good as gold. The family member who cared for Jan was quite severely disabled but could handle him easily and the pair made a wonderful team. Unfortunately the carer had recently moved to the capital, leaving poor Jan behind. It seems that due to the stress of losing his friend, Jan had demonstrated his feelings in the only way he knew how and became quite unmanageable. Happily Jan is now back at GHDT and though he was initially a bit of a handful, he is now calm and well behaved. Now that we have realised what a sensitive chap he is, we think he will stay with us or one of our staff for the rest of his life. If anyone would like to sponsor his keep during his rehabilitation, please let us know. It is touching and humbling to witness such loyalty and devotion.



Jan back at GHDT, being cared for by Musa

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Recent success stories



Melon on arrival

Melon was rescued by an English lady, Jacci, who had been trying to support him and his owner for some time down at the coast. It was clear that the owner was having a hard time keeping condition on Melon and he eventually decided to sell him and hand him into the care of the Jacci. Unfortunately she does not live in The Gambia all the time so she approached us for help. It took Melon a considerable time to come round, he seemed to have constant digestive problems but persistence paid off and he is now heading in the right direction. He then managed to damage a suspensory ligament but he seems to have turned the corner and is now doing well thanks to care given to him by our staff.



Melon feeling better



Banni before

Banni, the lovely grey mare was bought to us with severe burns. She had been foaling and somehow got caught up in a fire. Sadly, she lost her foal. It took some time but we are pleased to say she made a full physical recovery and her owners will be more careful with her in the future. They were mortified at the accident that had befallen her.

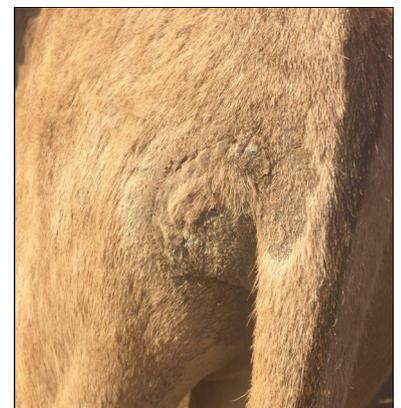


Banni After



Bruce's nasty bite wound

Bruce. Although we hate to see any of our animals injured, sometimes we have to marvel at the healing abilities of donkeys. We had a donkey bought in to us who we named Hendrix. He seemed to have a severe neck injury and was partially paralysed when he was bought in. He had a very guarded prognosis and we never dreamt that within a few months he would be sufficiently well to play in the paddocks and reprimand little Bruce and bite him on the bottom! Bruce has made an excellent recovery, thanks to the skill of our staff and is feeling much better thanks to the suturing skills of the staff and Hendrix, whose owners no longer want him as he is too old, is in another paddock!



Bruce fully recovered

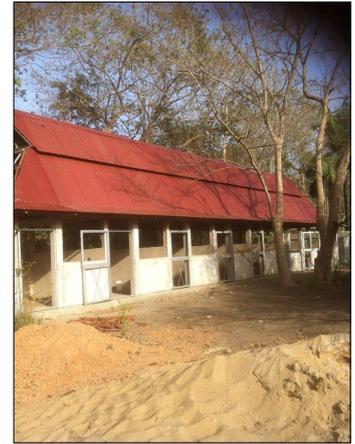
Would you like one of our fundraising packs to help you to come up with an exciting fundraising idea, please email ghdt@gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk. Thank you!

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Progress at the new centre

Our biggest and most challenging project to date has been to build a new state of the art centre closer to the coast. In addition to helping animals, it will become a resource for the provision of practical training to students of the nearby University and College. We also hope to offer continuing professional development training and support for the existing paravets in order to help increase The Gambia's veterinary capacity. If there are more well trained paravets through out the country they will be able to offer more help and support to the animals, carers and their families. Our staff will be teaching practical courses at our centre and are in dialogue with the University of The Gambia as to how they can help with developing the curriculum and giving their support. We also hope to attract students from overseas. Both our centres have accommodation and students will have access to training from qualified Gambian vets and a wildlife expert on horses, donkeys, farm animals and wildlife. This longstanding dream has been made possible thanks to Vets with Horsepower, The Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust, The Elise Pilkington Charitable Trust and our wonderful supporters. This is a sustainable way to bring help to the animals well into the future and for everyone who has contributed, what an incredible legacy you have provided for the animals and their families!



The roof on the new stable blocks has to be steep to deter baboons!

There have been some astonishing gestures of generosity in the journey to get this centre up and running and we are so grateful to everyone for their kindness and giving. On Heather's recent trip she had been focussing on essentials as money is tight, but one day whilst she was waiting to meet one of the workmen, she was looking at tiles in a very expensive shop and dreaming of how it would be if GHDT had limitless funds when she noticed one section of tiles were in the sale and very competitively priced - but they were still not on the essential list. One tile in particular caught her eye and she was really drawn to it. She decided to take the name and number of it so that if the Trust ever had sufficient money in the future we may be able to purchase it, though she was concerned that they may have reverted to their original price by then. The labels were in very small type and she really had to get close to see that the tile was called "Stella" the name of her late sister and the co founder of the charity. She was then even more frustrated that GHDT could not afford it, it was such an amazing coincidence!

Later that day she was speaking to her husband on the phone and told him about the Stella tiles and he said she must buy them. When it was pointed out that funds were tight and tiles were a luxury he kindly offered to fund them so that we did not miss the opportunity. We now have a huge pile of Stella tiles waiting to be laid! Call it serendipity, but it is good to know that we shall have "Stella" tiles in our centre as a tribute to our co-founder. Thank you so much Garth Armstrong!



Decorative new tiles for the centre by artist Clare Pavey

Thanks also go to Clare Pavey, an artist who lives very close to Heather in Ockley, who has created the most beautiful decorative tiles for the centre. There seems to be a magic about the place as everyone is joining in to make it as special as possible, even the welder who had been asked to make bars for the stable windows has welded them in a creative fashion, it seems everyone wants to contribute to making it something very special both for the benefit of horses and donkeys and for people who want to learn more about working equines. It is situated in the beautiful Makasutu Cultural Forest area with an abundance of birds and wildlife around, yet it is close enough to the built up urban areas to enable us to provide support for the city donkeys and horses as well as the farm animals in the coastal region. Our present centre in Sambel Kunda will continue to provide support for the areas further inland.

We still need funding to complete the new centre and our UK administrator, Emma Meadmore, is fundraising for it. If you would like to donate towards the completion of this much needed equine hospital and training centre please go to <https://www.gofundme.com/fwrtqdv8> and support her fundraising page. Thank you.

For more information about **Makasutu Culture Forest** please visit <http://www.mandinalodges.com/makasutu-forest>

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A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS

We are deeply grateful to ALL our supporters, but we thought it would be nice to share each other's experiences, so in this newsletter we will tell you about Sue Ashton and Kathy Sharman who fundraise tirelessly. Sue collects wonderful things to sell and holds regular garage sales. She also sends regular parcels of goodies for GHDT, our sister charity Stella's School Scheme and the clinic. Her sales have become very well known and extremely popular in the Blackpool area. Kathy and her lovely mother Barbara, have table top sales at various venues and raise money for us. Kathy is not only a member of the 333 club, which is a scheme that we set up to raise funds for the new centre by asking supporters to raise £333, but she and Barbara are members many times over and have played a significant part in the building of the new centre as a result of the sales

Another supporter, Wendy Richards holds an annual dog walk and sells second hand books for us, whilst Linda to Willmot and her family have held quizzes, barbeques and dog walks. You don't have to be rich to make a difference, you can still raise money by being generous with your time. Thank you from the bottom of our hearts to everyone who supports us, we just wish you could see for yourselves the difference that has been made all thanks to you.



Unfortunately we cannot list everyone that we would like to due to shortage of space but special thanks must go to the following, to everyone who has helped us in anyway, we want to say a big thank you, we deeply appreciate all that you have done for us!

We must especially thank Derek Knottenbelt and the Vets with Horsepower Team as well as the companies who supported them so well, and continue to support us, Kruise, Succeed, BCF Technology, and the many vets in practice who have given us their support. Many thanks to our supporters Sue Silk, Katrina Ellis, Linda and John Willmot Jessica Barham, Jeanette Aron, Ros and Russell Harris, Shirley Watts, Wendy and Jim Richards, Vicky Miller, Debbie Hinton, Joy Parker, Ann Varley, Sue Ashton, WTS/Vets United programme, Jenny Croft, Jessica Kidd, John Buford, Sue Stage, Gail McKinlay, Nancy Homewood, Beth Rush, The Petplan Charitable Trust, Aniwells for their wonderful Filtabac, the Trustees of the Chimpanzee Rehabilitation Trust, Alice Noakes Charitable Trust, Penny Cress Charitable Trust, The Tarim Trust, Anna Pugh, Stephanie Gallo, Catherine Cullis, Jane Waugh and our wonderful Trustees.

Finally we must not forget the lovely volunteers who come to help us. You brighten our days and give the animals in your care so much love and support, we couldn't do it without you.

Thank you, Thank you, Thank you !

OUR MISSION

At Gambia Horse and Donkey "Our Mission" is to improve the quality of life of the working equines in The Gambia and the quality of life of the people too. To create an environment where the horses and donkey can live free from pain and suffering. We believe in providing the Gambian people with the skills and knowledge to prevent and solve their own problems, creating a long-term, sustainable solution for the future.

Please help us achieve our goals and donate generously, help us make a difference to the working equines in one of the poorest countries in West Africa.

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COME AND MEET US AT HICKSTEAD



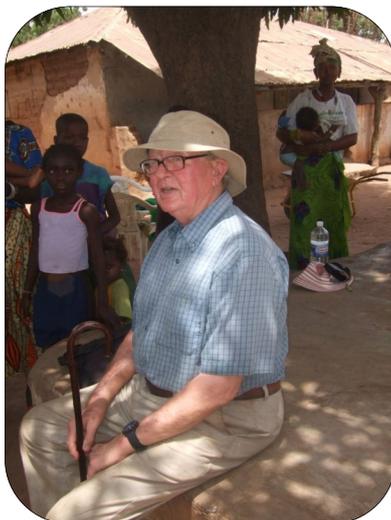
We will again be at Hickstead this year on the 23rd—26th June 2016 for the Equestrian.com Derby meeting and 26th—31st July 2016 for the Longines Royal International Horse Show. We would love to meet our supporters at the Sussex showground where you can watch stars from many varied equestrian disciplines compete. Hickstead's international fixtures include showjumping at all levels, showing, polo, eventing and driving, not to mention the miniature horses. Whether you are new to horse sport or a die-hard equestrian addict, there is plenty on offer at Hickstead including a retail village that has hundreds of shops to explore. We look forward to seeing you there !

HORACE !

Dear Horace, the elderly abandoned donkey that GHDT took in a couple of years ago continues to keep us on our toes. He appears to be feeling full of the joys of life and is madly in love with Ingrid. He loves attention and for the moment is eating well and even starting to put on a little weight. He has moments of great joy and enthusiasm and we have seen him charging about full of beans. He has a history of going off his food after three days and will then only eat it if we put the "attaya" dregs in it. This is a type of green tea that the staff drink after their meals. Horace loves it and joins the staff daily for his little treat! We only expected Horace to be with us for a few months as he was in such appalling condition. He has been with us for two years now and it gives us great satisfaction and pleasure that thanks to you our supporters, he has been able to know love, affection and care in his old age. He is thought to be closer to 30 than 20 years of age and we are all in awe of his tremendous spirit and capacity for fun. He is a truly great old man.



Cheeky Horace helping to change tyre !



Carl Boyde

It was with great sadness that we learned of the recent death of Carl Boyde, a veterinary surgeon, who died at the age of 86 on March 13th. Carl was an extra special human being with enormous compassion and empathy for animals and their owners and he was a very good friend to GHDT. He was the Chairman of World Association for Transport Animal Welfare and Studies and our organisations worked together on several projects. His passion and the help he provided for the working animals of the world was immense and he will be sadly missed and our condolences go to his wife Pamela, and to his family.

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EDUCATION IS THE WAY FORWARD

We have had a busy year already and we are not even half way through it! In January we joined with a German charity WTS/ Vets United, with whom we have worked before, to hold a workshop for students of the University of The Gambia. We had expected 20 students but 53 registered for the course so it was a busy time. It was wonderful to have so many enthusiastic and bright young people at Horse and Donkey and our German colleagues had prepared a comprehensive syllabus on animal health and welfare which was beautifully presented and very well received.

By the end of the course we had a group of students who wanted to set up what we believe is the first ever Gambian Animal Advocates group GAMBIA COLLEGE/UTG ANIMAL WELFARE ADVOCATES(GC/UTGAWA) and there were many animated discussions amongst the group on ways to improve animal welfare in The Gambia. It was an exciting workshop and these young people, who will be working with the animals of The Gambia in the future, gave us every reason to be optimistic about the future. We are very grateful to WTS/ Vets United for their collaboration, it is good to work with an organisation with such foresight.



The Gambian Animal Advocates Group



Farriery

Our second training event was some farriery continuing professional development training for our staff. This was carried out by farrier David Melsens, who was an excellent instructor and the staff felt that they learned a lot and better understood farriery as a result.

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust is pleased to welcome veterinarians Dr. Daffeh, Dr. Abdou Ceesay and Dr. Demba Jallow onto its staff. Dr. Kebba Daffeh is working with us on a part time basis in co operation with WTS/Vets United who fund him. We would also like to welcome Mr. Alpha Jallow who is a wildlife and conservation expert and who will be helping us with our education programme. The assistance of these gentlemen is already enabling the charity to take big steps forward in its aims to provide training and build veterinary capacity in The Gambia.



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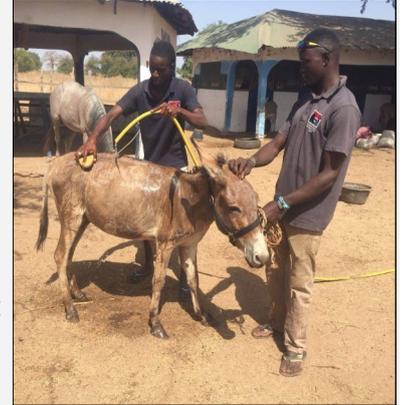
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ELVIS HAS ENTERED THE BUILDING !!

Elvis has recently joined us! His family initially called us to say he had a problem and from the phone description it sounded as if he had rabies. Our team went to see him and found a donkey who had been mishandled and was very bad tempered and trying to attack anyone who came near him. As punishment, he had been tied in the hot sun without any water which made him even more desperate. The children had been teasing him and he had managed to bite one of them. He reminded us of our lovely Ingrid, she was also ferocious when she arrived but is now sweet and gentle. After a very big drink of water he calmed down and was quite tolerant to our staff, however his family wanted to euthanise him as they said he was dangerous. Sadly, they didn't seem to understand that they had made him become dangerous.

He has come to stay with us for some rehabilitation and may one day go out to a carefully selected owner who will not betray his trust. He is very feisty until he is caught, but then seems to enjoy gentle attention. We want every experience he has to be positive, so his feet trimming will have to wait for a few days. Why did we call him Elvis? He is named in honour of our newest member of staff who was there when he was collected and whose nickname is Elvis.



Elvis getting some TLC

ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE LAST YEAR AT THE GAMBIA HORSE AND DONKEY TRUST

We have organised four training workshops for Gambian professionals /university students and a farriery workshop for our staff

We are teaching in 8 schools

We have provided rabies vaccine for 500 dogs

We have treated 345 inpatients and approximately 3000 outpatients (this does not include the bits and harnesses given out to alleviate equine suffering)

21 volunteer vets have been out to provide training for our staff and on workshops

6 shipments of supplies for horses, donkeys and some dogs have gone out including approx. 700 headcollars and 400 bits

We provide employment for a total of 27 Gambian staff

GHDT has provided 156 mobile clinics at the local markets

We have built a new equine hospital and training centre in a more urban area of the Gambia



A recent training course

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