The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust are immensely proud to announce the opening of their beautiful new Makasutu Training Centre and The Derek Knottenbelt Hospital. This centre is far more than just another equine rescue centre, it is a resource for training both Gambians and overseas veterinary professionals as well as providing support for the animals in the coastal region of The Gambia and their owners. The equine hospital consists of stabling for 20 patients, 6 paddocks, offices, a visitor centre and a lecture room together with accommodation for volunteers, students and staff.

This amazing centre represents a great deal of hard slog, tough fundraising, dedication, love and commitment from a great many people, all GHDT had to do was to ensure that it has done them justice. There have been so many people who have done everything from raising money, giving us their time, as well as their efforts in painting, varnishing, cleaning, scraping, building flat packs etc. that it is impossible to thank them individually. It looks wonderful and it is wonderful. Much of it has been done with help from companies like Wickes who gave us very discounted prices on the hospital and pharmacy kitchen units, the beautiful tiles in the reception which were made by a lovely talented neighbour, Claire Pavey. The bathrooms were donated by Kohler Mira bathrooms, the X-Ray machine by BCF Technology and the endoscope by Burtons. The store room is well stocked thanks to the elves and fairies from Kruuse. Vets with Horsepower, The Jean Sainsbury Animal Welfare Trust and The Elise Pilkington Trust all donated generously towards it.

It is an absolute joy to see it filling up with patients who need our care and to see it buzzing with students from the University of The Gambia, School of Agriculture and our apprentices. We hope all the people who learn here will go forth and carry the message of animal welfare and of good care and management.

Heather Armstrong, Charity Director says “It reminds me of all the very special people who have helped in so many different ways and that is reflected in the atmosphere of the place, which has a peace and calm about it. Thank you all so much”.

The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust
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Our Efforts are Paying off

Seeing our new centre buzzing with students learning, has made all of the hard work and worry of the last couple of years worth it. We recently received this message below and it was the icing on the cake for everyone at GHDT and gave us real hope for the future.

"I am a student of The Gambia College. I wish to express my sincere and proud gratitude to you and colleagues for your efforts and service you are giving to the animals. We have visited your veterinary hospital at Makasutu with my mentor Dr. Daffeh, and we have learned a lot there and I hope to come there again for attachment. I really love animals because, they are sentient beings like us and we should have a compassion and love for them. Thank you!"

Hickstead

We will be at the Hickstead showground again this year on 22 - 25 June 2017 at The Al Shira’aa Derby Meeting and 25th-30th July 2017 at The Longines Royal International Horse Show. Please come to visit us at our stand, it is always a pleasure to meet our supporters.

Training Begins at Makasutu

There was much excitement recently when the first training session for students in the Higher Diploma in Agriculture was held at our new centre. Everything our charity director, Heather Armstrong had envisaged when we were building the training centre and hospital came to fruition for the first time. 68 students came to us for training and thanks to XL vets along with our own vets Dr. Demba Jallow. Dr. Abdou Ceesay and Dr. Kebba Daffeh from WTG, the students had a wide and varied day at our centre. Knowledge is strength and these young people are expanding their knowledge for the benefit of both the animals and the people of The Gambia. Different groups of students will come to us on a weekly basis now. This group were particularly lucky to have Lorna Buckley and Natalie Sims from XL Vets enriching the training and we would like to say a big thank you to them both and to XL vets.

One of the first training sessions at Makasutu

Another lecture/demo at the new centre

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Our Apprenticeship Scheme

We recently came up with the idea of an apprenticeship scheme where some of the many unemployed youths can come and work with the GHDT and learn, and then take their new found knowledge back to their communities to help the animals there. The cost of funding such a scheme for each apprentice would be £10 per week or £480 per year, which would give a young person hope and skills which he/she could use to help his community. In April our first 10 apprentices began their training. We are very grateful to Ann Varley who has prepared the NVQ type course work for them and to our Gambian trainers.

The apprentices will cover many topics. The animal welfare theme will run through it all, but it will cover agricultural animals and wildlife and conservation as well as human behaviour change and interacting with the public. If you feel you could sponsor one of these young people this is really a unique way of helping both people and animals and though we know that £10 per week is a large amount of money, £480 as a fundraising target is achievable. It would be a wonderful thing to do and would give those involved hope and increase awareness of animal welfare.

PYTHIOSIS - an unusual skin infection

This little horse was bought to us by his very concerned owner and had come a great distance to see if we could help. He had a nasty fungal disease called pythiosis which is quite rare. Pythiosis in horses usually occurs as a serious skin infection. The skin develops raised, ulcerated lesions that ooze serum. Most affected horses are extremely itchy at the site of infection and may self-traumatize by vigorously scratching or biting at the lesions. The owner had been trying to control the disease for months. Fortunately we recognised it and were able to begin immediate treatment.

We were fortunate to be able to have the diagnosis confirmed by experts at the University of Michigan who have given us excellent advice. We have only seen 6 cases in 15 years and we are lucky that 5 out of 6 of those cases did well and went home. This little chap has now gone home to his very grateful owners who were so appreciative that they left a gift for the staff of some green tea.
Sad goodbyes to Hope & Maisie

The end of 2016 was not a particularly good one for us. It appears that we have a virus affecting horses in our area and we think it is a particularly aggressive form of Equine Herpes Virus. We lost our precious Hope to it and on Christmas Eve Heather Armstrong had to give the instruction to put Maisie down. Hope came to GHDT as a very sick little foal, her mother had died of starvation in 2007 when The Gambia was experiencing severe food shortages. Hope’s owners brought her to us as they thought we were her only chance of survival.

When she arrived she was too weak to get up on her own and we had to rehydrate her before administering medicines. She was named Hope as all at GHDT hoped she would survive. Since then she thrived in our care and grew into a stunning little horse with a cheeky character and she adored attention. She spent her time with her best friend Mo and they loved kicking up the dust together in our paddocks. Hope also had been helping some of the local farmers who cannot afford a horse of their own during the farming year. She is greatly missed.

Maisie came to us as a foal as we were concerned about her future as her owner had to sell her to pay off a debt. At the time she was far too young to be sold on and we feared she would end up in a downward spiral. We were desperately in need of funds to purchase Maisie and make sure that she had a good future ahead of her. She was in a poor condition and had a very nervous disposition, European Saddles heard of her plight and very generously donated the £200 for us to purchase her and keep her safe. Our dedicated team worked hard to gain her trust and get her in a healthy condition.

We are grieving for those we have lost and worrying for those that remain and for the poor owners who depend so much on their animals to earn a living. Keeping horses and donkeys healthy in The Gambia is always challenging. Our only consolation is that Hope and Maisie had as good lives as they could have had with us with no hunger and good care but it doesn't make losing them any easier.

THE VETS WITH HORSEPOWER TEAM RIDE AGAIN!

We have been privileged in recent years to have been supported by The Vets with Horsepower Team who are a group of motor biking senior level equine vets who go on motorbike tours delivering high level continuous professional development training to raise money for nominated charities each year. In previous years the team have generously supported GHDT and the funds raised have gone towards our new centre at Makasutu. The team are taking to the road again this year from 24th June—7th July and some of the proceeds of this new tour will purchase an equine ambulance for The Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust. We are so grateful to the team for their continued support and their contribution to improving the welfare of the equines of The Gambia and their owners. We wish them a safe and successful trip.
A BOY AND HIS DONKEY

We recently had the very sad news that one of our very first project donkeys ever to go out some 10/11 years ago had recently been euthanized as he had the dreaded neuro form of trypanosomiasis. Moses the donkey was purchased by Peter Coote and was allocated to a lovely family in a village called Misera. Moses worked hard for his family and he and the eldest son, Cherno Amadou, formed a particularly strong bond. They were donkey club stars and excelled at donkey ball together until Cherno Amadou grew too big to ride him. He won numerous times at our annual shows and we recall tears of frustration from Cherno on one occasion when they were placed second. When we tried to console him, he said, "but why can't they see he is the best donkey in The Gambia, I can see it" in later years Cherno went away to school and his brother took the ride, but the same magic was not there.

Moses and Cherno adored each other and would do anything for each other. Our sympathy goes out to the family who cared for him so well, if he so much as sneezed the wrong way he would be brought in for a check up! Moses can never be replaced, but thanks to Peter the family have another little donkey to help them and we hope they will have many happy years together. This is the lovely lady (pictured left) who is lucky enough to be joining Cherno Amadou's family in Misera. Her name is Damaris Rosco. The sponsor normally names the donkey, but there has been some problem with pronunciation of Damaris so she is known to her friends as Rosco.

RIP Moses.

A Regular Gift is an invaluable way to help us at the Gambia Horse and Donkey Trust. We need to be able to care for sick and injured equines and also our resident horses and donkeys with the knowledge that a donation comes in every month that allows us to plan ahead more effectively. With your help we can continue to forge ahead with future projects such as maintaining our mobile clinics, running two hospitals and the implementation of pioneering and exciting training courses to improve the lives of the working equines in The Gambia and to help the young people to find employment. Please consider taking out a Direct Debit if you can. Thank you.

THE SHOW

Due to the political situation that there was in The Gambia at the beginning of the year, and which is now thankfully resolved “The Show” was postponed. We have now re-scheduled it for the 9th December 2017. We would like to thank everyone who so generously sponsored classes and we will have a full report on it in a future newsletter. We hope you will put it in your diaries and come and join us for the show!
CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR OUR STAFF

We take every opportunity to enable our staff to learn as much as possible so that they in turn can pass on their knowledge to the people with whom they work. Recently we were lucky enough to have Ann Varley visiting to provide training on harnessing and draught animal technology. We are very grateful to her for her help, the staff very much enjoyed the course.

LONG TERM VOLUNTEER REQUIRED

We are seeking an enthusiastic volunteer for a one year contract, helping some of the poorest people and animals in the world.

You would share your time between our two centres working alongside our staff and short term volunteers and ensuring the centres run smoothly on a daily basis sometimes working outside of normal hours and often “outside the box” so an ability to use your initiative and prioritise a varied workload is a must.

You will need to be educated to degree level or equivalent and have appropriate knowledge of equine welfare and be able to communicate this effectively but compassionately and respectfully to people of all ages and cultures.

Volunteering is a wonderful opportunity to use your skills to help others and really make a difference whilst having the experience of your life. If you are prepared to give us a year of your time, we can pay your airfares, provide you with board and lodging and a small amount of pocket money each month. You will receive invaluable veterinary experience and life skills as well as the knowledge that your efforts are bringing meaningful improvements to the lives of both the animals and their owners.

Position available for immediate start.

For a full job description details of how to apply please contact heatherghdt@gmail.com for more

These photos are some of our most memorable recent cases that have come to GHDT for successful treatment.


**BULLET—OUR LATEST SPONSOR HORSE**

GHDT has a new resident horse! We recently came across a horse with an awful hole in his head and so we decided to call him Bullet. Although Bullet is fully recovered from his injury, he is a very highly strung and nervous little fellow. It takes him time to trust people and though he has an excellent relationship with one member of staff, Ousman, who adores him, he is still slightly nervous with other people. His owner unfortunately felt unable to handle him and was going to sell him.

We all foresaw a downward spiral for this poor little fellow. Ousman begged Heather Armstrong, our Charity Director to buy him but GHDT is not in a financial position to do this so Heather has dipped into her savings to purchase him.

If anyone could help with his keep by sponsoring him, it would be much appreciated. It is just £2 per month, but it will make the world of difference to this little fellow.

Please contact ghdt@gambiahorseanddonkey.org.uk if you would like to help, thank you.

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**SAD VICTIM OF A LANDMINE BLAST**

We had an unusually sad incident recently, there have been some problems in Southern Senegal and rebels have been putting down landmines on their side of the border. Somehow one managed to get across onto The Gambia, it may have been carried by water during the rainy season, no one is quite sure how it happened, but a man who was out collecting firewood with his two young sons and his horse and cart, became the innocent victims of this tragedy. All three humans were killed and our deepest sympathies go to their family and friends.

A concerned Gambian messaged us about the horse who had stood there with the bodies of his dead family in 45 degree heat for over 30 hours. (People were afraid to approach him in case there were other landmines.) We immediately sent a team out and he was collected and brought to the Derek Knottenbelt Veterinary Hospital. He is the sweetest natured horse and an excellent patient and so far with the kind help of Professor Derek Knottenbelt, who is advising us from a distance he has made an astounding recovery and has become a firm favourite with our staff.

We have named him Wassadu Jato, he came from Wassadu and Jato means Lion or “brave” and he certainly has the heart of a lion.

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Need a scrap car removing from your drive, for FREE? Simply contact Giveacar at www.giveacar.co.uk or on 0207 7364242 to organise your free collection, and your scrap car will be transformed into a cash donation for GHDT!
Thank you for your kind support, it is enabling us to make such a difference

With the opening of our new centre, there are simply too many people who have helped us to be able to name them individually, but I hope that after reading this newsletter you have a small flavour of what has been achieved. None of this could have happened without YOU and the support that you have given us and so many animals and people have reason to be thankful to you, not least all of us at GHDT.

We would also like to thank all the volunteers who have been out to offer us their help and training, even if it is just kind words of support, every one of you has made more of a contribution than you will ever truly know. Thank you all so very much.

We welcome visitors to both of our centres and for anyone wanting to visit, an excellent place to stay is the nearby Mandina Lodges. For peace and tranquillity in the heart of the African bush, the striking riverside Mandina Lodges at Makasutu Forest offer an unforgettable experience in the wilderness with the chance to discover the people and wildlife of The Gambia that have made the forest their home: the amazing birdlife, monkeys, monitor lizards and ever-increasing troupes of baboons.

Mandina Lodges features in the book “1011 Escapes To Make Before Your Die”. The setting for the lodges have to be seen to be believed; the scenery is stunning and the setup is warm and welcoming. Everything at Mandina Lodges is constructed from local materials and built with the environment in mind. Please visit http://www.mandinalodges.com if you would like to visit this stunning area.

There are millions of working equines throughout the world owned by families who are living in extreme poverty. For us who live in more prosperous countries, it is easy to sit back and pass judgement when we are faced with images of sad, emaciated, wounded working animals, and it is all too easy to place the blame on the animal’s owners. However, when you take a step back and look at the bigger picture, you view these images in a new light. Behind almost every animal’s suffering is a family that is suffering too.

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT**

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