

THE HARTBEAT

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Well, what can anyone say as to what's going on in this wonderful world we live in? Do this, do that, don't do this, don't do that. And what the hell do we do to avoid the dreaded COVID?! All I can say is at least the animals and birds we take in are grateful, and as we are the only rescue centre in the area to help especially baby birds and wildlife. And over the last 12 months there has been **hundreds**, from bats to roe deer, hedgehogs, field mice, muntjack deer which seem to get a raw deal from most of the large animal charities as they say that because they are not native to this country, they must be killed whether they are injured or not! Even the fact that they are not hurt they just put them down, I know that this is going on and I feel it is **wrong**. These deer did not ask to be brought into this country at all and I feel there is enough room for us all. I welcome your thoughts on this.

As I've mentioned before when I first started helping **Kath & Dave Davies** at the Wythall Animal Sanctuary (which is not in any way connected to Hollytrees) I was only 13-14 years old but Kath drummed it into me to help anything that needs help. She was a great believer in **reincarnation** as am I. Some of the things that happen here and some of the things that I'm guided to and have to deal with always leaves me gobsmacked, I've kept a list of some of these things for when I get my act together and get my book written, so keep your eyes open. You as loyal members will be first to know of anything.

Now I would like to have another little moan, what on Earth are the **Veterinary surgeries** and their bosses playing at?! I can't believe what people are being charged for some of the easiest and simplest of actions, even the consultations have **tripled in price!** It leaves a nasty taste in the owner's mouth when they have to choose between an operation to save their beloved pet or let it be put to sleep. I'm also horrified by the amount of animals that are advertised on the famous internet sites (Preloved, Gumtree etc.), it's got to be stopped. If you have the money you can buy anything with no safety net at all, with most cases being the classic case where mom & dad go back to work and the children are back at school, they come home to find their new puppy has messed all over the house or chewed through cables or both, especially after Christmas. We used to be inundated with people needing to get rid of the animals that they have paid good money for. Most people ask the people who they got them from if they could have it back and then they ask for their money back; in most cases they will take the animal back but give no money back. Then they usually advertise the animal and get even more money! Also there are puppies being smuggled into this country from all parts of the world, most coming in via Ireland. Also, have you noticed the number of dogs etc. being stolen to order? This is horrific, people are being followed and attacked, dogs snatched from vulnerable people, even children are targeted. People who have puppies for sale are also at risk, someone comes to see the puppies and then come back in the dead of night and take the lot including the parents. It's a dirty way of earning a living but trust me it's happening.

I also find all these foreign imported street runners are beginning to undo a lot of work done by our **dog wardens**, you don't see street running animals, as you did some 15 years ago, you don't see packs of dogs roaming the streets. Bitches in season used to cause chaos, especially when children were going to school, I do know this as a fact because before dog wardens, I got the job as I worked for the **Birmingham City Council Parks Department**, and more often than not these packs would end up in a park or open space and they would not be split up or moved on without a light. I must admit it's a call I used to dread, each and every case was different and I personally used to aim for the bitch, armed with loads of good food and a humane wire snare (which doesn't harm the animal). Once I have the female caught, I throw all the food

and into the van comes the poor female, I then leave the area for the males to find their own way home and that saves them being taken to the **Birmingham Dogs Home** which in those days was in New Canal Street, which was not the best of kennels. But I used to book the bitch in at the nearest police station as found by me, the police then would give me a certificate which allowed me to keep the female for a minimum of one month, after that we could do what we wanted with her. Some times we were lucky enough to find the owner who was pleased to get the dog back. I think a month is long enough for anyone to get their pet back.

I used to help at Hollytrees when **Iris & Les Elliot** owned the place and was always there to receive any of the bitches that I caught, once the month was up we obviously had to get them spayed because of unwanted puppies and not knowing what male dog has mated her. We used to use a good friend of Hollytrees as a vet, he was **Tony Boardman** who used to have a practice in **Alvechurch**, he and his wife Wendy were fantastic to rescue centres and genuine animal rescue people.

Hollytrees Kennels some 50 years ago was a rescue centre for the **B.U.A.V** (British Union For The Abolition Of Vivisection). They used to save all sorts of animals which were destined for the laboratory table, sometimes they were **illegal operations** and downright cruel, often resulting in illegal deaths. Cutting a long story short, there were certain dog breeders who used to supply the cosmetic industry and most of the experiments were unrecorded and more importantly to the dogs (mainly Beagles, a good natured breed), were kept in **horrific** conditions, believe me I've seen for myself. Also, all these creatures being used for experiments had to be tattooed on their inner groin which was done as young puppies. Iris & Les Elliot used to work alongside a group of brilliant people called the **A.L.F** (Animal Liberation Front), some super, kind people. The A.L.F used to raid these illegal breeders and come to Hollytrees with any of the dogs, cats, rabbits, guinea pigs and many more, of which some were stolen pets, any with tattoos were taken to Tony Boardman and he would remove the tattoos when he spayed or neutered the animal. Sometimes the tattoos could only be obliterated or covered over the numbers and letters and sure enough up for new homes they went and yes they were saved. I must move on now, I still find it very upsetting. Thank God things are nowhere near as bad nowadays, with modern video and computers etc.



Moving on, I'd like to let you know about what we've helped during the last 12 months and my word, ask anyone who to call if they find an **injured pigeon or bird** of any sort and they'd tell you to phone Hollytrees! Thanks to my very loyal members of staff, we've rescued deer of all sorts; **Red Deer, Roe Deer** and the unwanted **Muntjack Deer**. We have proper **nets** for deer, sometimes long and 5 meters high, i.e the full width of a motorway, the only trouble is you need someone on the other end to hold it high and when a deer does get in a net, you need to hold on tight and it does take a while to untangle but it is safe. I have nets suitable for nearly every animal.

Well, I found myself struggling a bit when the covid struck, no one was going away on holiday and running the business was a struggle with nothing coming in as far as money was concerned. For those who don't know, **my only income** for me and my family is **the Hollytrees Boarding Kennels and Cattery**. I am proud to say all my work for H.A.R.T is **voluntary** and it will always be that way. I do not charge the charity rent but I must admit I did start to panic a little, especially when we got calls from **Social Services**, the **Police**, and the general public asking to take in animals where people had either gone into hospital or found dead but you know us, we had to help. There was dogs coming in that we had to wash and isolate because we didn't have too much info on the animals history, vaccinations etc. We had some really genuine cases, some people's relatives could help us out with finding homes for some of the cases and our staff stood by us 100%. Certain restrictions were placed upon us, i.e we couldn't have our regular volunteers in to help us. When people bring in any pets for ordinary boarding we have to take the pets off the owner with gloved hands at the first gate, we have to keep the leads, no bedding to come in with the animal, and where we take any monies we have to wipe it medical wipes. **All the fun of the fair!**

Another thing that helped us with the dogs that were orphaned was they seem to accept what we were doing for them, thank God we have 4 blocks of kennels along with ample spaces that can serve as isolation blocks. So far, all the animals we've helped have either gone back to the original owner or if not we've managed to get permission to rehome the animal, but at least things are steadying up now. And thanks to our good staff, the boarding side is picking up nicely, but the rules still apply.

I've just been told I'm rambling on a bit but the business is picking up which as mentioned is the only income for my family, the rescue is still all voluntary to the Dedicoat family and I wouldn't have it any other way. Talking about the Dedicoat family, I feel sure I've mentioned the latest addition, little **Amelia** bless her.



She's now 15 months old and what a character she is. My first granddaughter and **wow!** Don't we know it!! She is the very best accident Wendy has ever had. Her and daddy **Tyrone** are so lucky to have a granddad like me! And what a little star she is, her first priority when she comes to Hollytrees is to go down to feed **Gypsy**, the old black/white cob, more antique now. Then onto feeding the barn owl, then the bantams, then the laying hens, then the pigeons that can fly and the ones that can't! Then the ducks, then **Benny** the macaw, she loves him, then the guinea pigs and the rabbits and then the avery birds, then the seagulls and finally the fish! She then settles down but only after all this. Incidentally she does the feeding from a choice of 4 **shopping trollies!** Not her pram or pushchair, it must be a shopping trolley! **Bless her**, she's like a breath of fresh air. P.S I always find time for younger members of my family because they could be the ones to choose my nursing home! Haha!

We are still a family, wife **Ann** is doing her bit looking after the rescued horses, donkey and sheep along with **Doreen & Arthur** (Ann's mom and dad), they have another field up near **Wythall** which gives our

fields a rest but between them they do a brilliant job! Keeping the donkey and the goats in can prove to be a work of art! Arthur not only looks after the mucking out of the ponies, goats, donkey and sheep, he also collects the manure and has also got an allotment. Wow, his runner beans, peas and tomatoes take some beating, they are superb and we've always plenty in the freezer. Then we've got **Wendy**, who's got her hands full but she's into this Facebook game which I must admit certainly does the job if you've lost anything or want anything or there's an animal in trouble then Facebook can be the key to a happy ending! Well done Wendy, even if it is at two or three o'clock in the morning! Then good old **Laura**, who's up to her neck in university studying mental health and also teaching it in **Nottingham** and in **Yorkshire**. I think she's avoiding Amelia, typical daughters! Then we've got the baby, not so little **Emma**. Well what can I say about her, Laura and Emma are always meeting up in all sorts of places when they **play tag rugby** or **ladies football** and can I say they are almost professionals. 1 year before COVID struck, they played for **England** in Israel! They are doing very well now playing all over this country. Emma has turned out to be a dark horse, she was going to be a P.E teacher when she left local school Woodrush but for some unknown reason, she took to becoming a fully trained **Paramedic!** She has almost passed every test &

examination to become fully qualified and she absolutley loves every minute of it. She's passed her advanced driving qualification and heavy goods qualifications and nearly all the medical side of it. **So how about that then!** Ann and I need never to worry about anything in our old age.

I would now like to ask all you good people out there to spare a couple of minutes to think of anyone you've lost over the last 12 months, **human or pet**. Hollytrees has sadly lost a few genuine friends and they are all in our thoughts. Of course, we are approaching that time of year that we should be together at, **Christmas**, but as mentioned before, reincarnation does play a big part at Hollytrees and it does help. I sometimes wonder if things do get mixed up, but at the end of most days when my head hits the pillow, I have a few thoughts of what's been helped today and what we need to do at Hollytrees and before I know it I'm out for the count. Most days with loads of telephone calls and people coming to the centre to donate things and offer help we are a happy house.

I'd like to take this oppurtunity to thank you all for what you do and have done for us and our rescues throughout this really mindblowing year. On behalf of my family, **Tracy** (Manageress), new staff member **Matt** and his mom the cake maker **Joy**, **Sophie** (good as gold) and her family, never forgetting **Adam**, who left us to venture into the computer world in September and my how we miss him, he did all the technical stuff here (CCTV, alarms, ring doorbells, computers, microchipping etc.) you name it, he could do it or put it right. Thank you Adam, we so miss you and **good luck from us all**. Going back to Tracy, she tells me she's been here for 30 years plus, **wow!** Then of course we have a team of brilliant volunteers, take young



Eric, 3 days a week he gives us and he takes on any job set before him (His wife **Anne** pays us to let him come here but don't tell him). **Bell**, a lovely mousey type lady who comes here every Monday and Friday, she tackles any job and does it 100% perfectly. **Little Sue** and all her family, they take on all our babies from pigeons to rabbits, hedgehogs, mice, they will try and indeed win with nearly everything they take (don't mention seagulls to their neighbours). And a special thank you to **Heidi McDonald** and her 2 little girls who always bring in our breakfasts!

And all the good people who come and tackle some of the tough jobs, uncle **Gordon** will do any job and does it 100% perfectly, providing he's nowhere near Sophie or a wasp! **Christmas Craig**, I have to keep an eye on him, he likes to throw things away and that is against my religion! Friends behind the screens we thank you. Our paper people who keep our pale green wheelie bin topped up with saleable donations, bedding, food etc. **You keep our wheels turning**. Also we have Uncle **Alan** & Auntie **Wendy** for years now, Alan has walked some of our long term dogs that require that bit extra to socialise them. And not



forgetting the hundreds of Sainsbury's doughnuts he brings us, jam and vanilla! He also has taken a family of Hedgehogs which he did perfectly, in fact he was quite upset when they decided to leave the nest. We've also had some good news and a long lost helper has arrived, Young **Cheryl**, who's also good at socialising some of our lively dogs and she has an elderly mother who can't always be left but she's fully vaccinated and back in the saddle. In fact, all our staff and helpers are vaccinated.

Another case with a difference came in the other day, in the **60 plus years** that I've been helping animals and birds I've never ever had to help or even come across an **Otter**, until 2 weeks ago. Once again, we had a call from a gentleman who had phoned everyone he could to get some help for an adult Otter he had spotted on the side of the road in an area called **Meriden Colehill**. He sent his details of his whereabouts to my mobile and off I went at top speed, the man said that at first when he passed the animal, he thought it was dead but on the way back from his shopping he stopped to confirm what he saw. To his amazement it was an **adult Otter**, sadly it was dead and must have been there for at least 5 days, it was absolutely covered in maggots, that was bad enough, but to the man's amazement, just a couple of feet from the body tucked under a load of leaves was her **cub**! It was coming out when it was quiet and was frantically trying to suckle off its mother, the dead mom had no milk but the cub was at least **1/3 grown**. The cub was sucking anywhere on the mom, but only eating and swallowing the maggots. I immediately dropped a landing net on the cub and popped it in a strong container, it put up a good fight, snapping at us when we put our fingers on the door. I picked up the dead mom as well, she was a good weight and back to Hollytrees I went. We immediately put the cub under a heat lamp and gave it some small pieces of **raw Cod** that it devoured ravenously. About 2 hours later it pooped something I've never seen before, the poor creature passed at least 1/2 a mug full of dead and live maggots in blood. This was at 8:30pm, it was a little quiet when I checked on it at 11pm and it was sort of basking under the heat lamp, I was pleased. The next day I needed to know what was the best thing to do with the cub, I certainly hadn't ever had or dealt with an otter before. I tried the **Birmingham Nature Centre** on the Pershore Road and I tried **Vale Wildlife**, both were helpful both said you need to notify the authorities. So I knew who to contact, yes, our good friends at **BBC Radio WM**. And yes, they put it on air and sure enough I had a call from a young lady from the **Department Of The Environment**, based in **Staffordshire**. She came over immediately, ready to transport the cub and its dead mother down to **Cardiff University**. Unfortunately, the cub had passed away, with live maggots still coming out of its mouth and backend, but she took them both to be postmortemed and details recorded.

And a final mention & a special thanks to **Lynsey** who runs a group on Facebook called "**The Only Way Is Wythall**" which has supported us along with other charities throughout the year. What a lovely community we have. Also, thanks to 3 local business men **Chris Lacey** of **Lacey's Craft Butchers** for his kind donations, **Simon Beckett** of Beckett's Farm, choosing us in lieu of wedding gifts and Graham of **Companions** who has the sad job of pet cremation. Hopefully not but if you do need his services then don't hesitate to contact him.

Well folks, if you've helped us at Hollytrees and I've not given you a mention, I do apologise but I've had a final warning to stop writing and get this off to the printers. So on behalf of everyone and everything we've helped at Hollytrees, **we wish you all the very best for 2022**, let's be honest it's **GOT** to be better than what we've all experienced over the past couple years. I personally am proud that we have continued to help whatever comes to Hollytrees. **I thank you all for your help and encouragement.** – **Ray Dediccoat**

If you've enjoyed reading this, we can always make use of your old Christmas cards, feel free to leave any in the green wheelie bin outside where we also receive newspapers and blankets etc. Thanks a million!