



# THE HARTBEAT CHRISTMAS 2018

ISSUE NUMBER 56

December 2018

Well folks can I firstly send you my sincere apologies for the lack of newsletters. I will have a better system for them as well as some help for next year. As from 2019 I shall do my very best to get back to quarterly newsletters. I do love to share with you good genuine people the goings on at **HOLLYTREES**. We really value your support and encouragement. It certainly helps us carry out what I know is so important; not only to the animals but sometimes it's even a lifesaver to people. To play a part in that only encourages us to carry on what we do, which apart from the 3 members of staff, is all **VOLUNTARY**, including myself. I've always done rescue work here at Hollytrees; ever since I first helped the late **KATH DAVIES** who founded Wythall Animal Sanctuary, many years ago.

Firstly a bit of big news: Ann, my wife, has left me!! She's left me with 3 children, 6 dogs and that's just in the house! Thankfully she will be back in a few days. I'm pleased to say she has had 8 days away in the Cotswolds on a horse riding break. Ann and her remarkable mother Doreen take their horses away every year. They stop at a fantastic old farm hotel with stables and acres of grounds that are surrounded by bridleways. They trek off every morning into the **REAL** countryside. With the pressure of me and this establishment such a break really does recharge her batteries!

I am currently sat in the comfort of my house, its 11:50pm and I've made my mind up to get this newsletter finished.

It has been another incredible year at Hollytrees, some of the most trying but rewarding wildlife rescues we've ever had. Huge thanks to our daytime folks and our volunteers who all muck in and do their bit. We find with any baby bird or animal little and as often as you can seems to be the secret.

It has been an especially trying time for birds this year. So many becoming dehydrated and desperate for food and with the weather so dry, insects keep themselves covered and out of sunshine which means the birds can't find them. Pigeons, Woodpigeons, Collared Doves and feral Racing Pigeons, have all come in by the dozen.

They are so happy to get up to 60ml of **READYBREK** squirted into them by a long nozzled syringe. Intended for use in hospitals to tube feed humans, the syringes come to us when their use by date has been reached, but what a waste to throw them away. So I ask you good people, if you get your hands on any they are a godsend to

us. They're even used to tube feed pups and older dogs and cats; they are superb.

One of the challenges this year were 3 Goldcrest chicks that were brought to us. Sadly the mom was had by a naughty cat, dad was going frantic but was **NOT** feeding the brood. They were little devils to hand rear but we managed to save 2 out of the 3 with the help of our friend Terry. I find it so interesting how nature takes over after we've got them to a stage where they can feed for themselves. We feed all of our insectivorous babies on **LIVE MEALWORMS** which I feel is the key to our success. The real tough guys are the finches, they really know how to put up a fight. Another secret is to get other older birds to help show them what it's all about. We've got some really steady and tame Canaries who soon show them. It's the same with the Pigeons, Woodpigeons and the Collared Doves, and this year we've had a fair number of **STOCK DOVES**; they all benefit by watching the tamer Pigeons we have. Our main pigeon rescuer is a gentlemen by the name of Mick. Mick lives on a boat way over in Tamworth. He's moored under 2 road bridges and believe me it's a Pigeon **PARADISE!** The bridges provide a safe breeding place and shelter, and Mick provides the breakfast which is all ok until the youngsters decide to try and fly!! At least these pigeons have Mick looking out for them. Another friend of ours named **UNCLE CARL JELLY**, who I've known well over 40 years, no matter what is going on in his life he will **NOT** stand by and see **ANY** animal in trouble. He releases our Pigeons with a colony that he feeds and other members of the parish do the same. These animals are so grateful. If you happen to live by **SWANSHURST PARK** and you get poohed on—**BLAME ME!!**

We've had a fair few **SWANS** to sort out as well this year. The most graceful of the water fowl family. Mid year and up to October and November the lovely baby Cygnets start to be pushed out of the family colony and are forced to leave and find their own areas, find partners and new ponds etc to call their own. But they get into all sorts of problems during this very important part of their life. Most of the time we can cope, but if it's complicated or we need help we are proud to know a young lady from Droitwich by the name of **JAN HARRINGAY**. Jan created and runs the **DROITWICH SWAN RESCUE**. She has a friend called John who always turns up to collect them from us. We salute you both!

Owls are a grateful sort to rear. We had a rewarding time with some owlets that we had brought in from **EARLSWOOD LAKES**. Several owl nesting boxes had been installed but not maintained too well; as such several had the bottoms go rotten and with the weight of up to 3 chicks—out they fall. We've had 5 owlets this year to rear, we managed it successfully, but it all takes time and patience.



We take anything in as you know, this year I have had the joy of rearing some **MOLES** and my word can't they eat! And the strength they have in their front feet! What fun we had with them. We started off with **CIMICAT**, a baby kitten food, followed by liver which we put in a syringe and away we go. I will never forget and cherish the gratitude shown by the little critters, but after a 10 day session of liver things started to change. Even innocent little moles were ready to defend themselves if upset, something I've never seen in a baby mole before. I've seen it in several of the Rats and Mice, and certainly in the Stoats and the Weasels, they can be vicious from the start. Another interesting rearing patient this year was a **SHREW**, we only had the one this year but with the help of some donated reptile heating pads we did it, vicious little devils they are! Voles, loads of house and field mice, which soon decide to go their own way when they are strong enough. Also can't forget the bats, another good sort to rear. Honey, mashed up liver and most important we always have a supply of **LIVE MEALWORMS**.



Rearing these animals is a heck of a challenge but we've got some more than useful friends that are always on hand to get stuck in. Little Sue who used to work here a few (not **TOO** many) years ago, until she fell in love with one of our volunteers!! Three lovely children later and now the whole family come up most weekends to help out. Sue also takes our hedgehogs and squirrels for rearing and rehabilitation prior to release, bless her and her lovely family. Also a huge thanks to Mr Terry Richardson who helps by taking on some of the real tiny birds. He put us on to some quality rearing food that really works and has definitely increased our success rate. Couldn't accomplish what we do without the help of these sorts of people.

Some of the more sensible animals will right themselves. I had a call via daughter Wendy's Facebook, which I find absolutely amazing. The call was about a young **DEER** which had difficulty standing but was ready to dodge Adam and I when we went to check on him. He was obviously in a fair bit of pain however. Anyway we managed to get hold of him and then the fun began. The only way I can describe it was like flying a kite on a really windy day, but it was a **MUNTJAC** deer instead of a kite! I had to get a blanket over it **ASAP** and into one of those huge builders bags, we managed to tie the bag up whilst also strapping the deer down inside where it obviously felt calm and secure. We phoned our best vet for wildlife who said bring it up and I must euthanize it! Like bloody hell you will! The vet was 100% correct because Muntjac deer are not native to Britain and should one be trapped it must be destroyed. There's no way I'm sending an animal to its death just because some idiot allowed them to be brought into Britain however many years ago. So we set it up under an infrared heat lamp to get over the shock. Arrangements with the help of Annice were made to transport it to a

fantastic group called **THE VALE WILDLIFE CENTRE** near to Evesham, where some good friends of ours Helen and Tim Partridge are the vets. Sadly after about half an hour we heard a commotion only to find the poor thing had started fitting, it took 3 very deep breaths in and passed away. Very sad indeed.

I don't know if you guys recall some of the flash foods we had in the area this year, but boy did we have a busy time. It certainly rocked the Hollywood area. Rabbits, flooded pond fish, evacuated houses, cats and dogs. No warning down it came. We did what we could and made them proud.

As you can tell we've had quite a busy year with the wildlife rescue and hand rearing of baby animals, particularly birds. It starts from February right up to August, and with baby pigeons who carry on breeding all year round. But my motto for all these years is give **EVERYTHING A FIGHTING CHANCE**. I started volunteering at the original Wythall Animal Sanctuary at age 14; not long before helping out at this place as well, which back then was known as Hollytrees Kennels and the **B.U.A.V** (British Union for the Abolition of Vivisection) run by **LES** and **IRIS ELLIOT**. The owners of these organisations put so much effort into keeping any baby creature no matter what species. They made me aware of the importance of the subject of **REINCARNATION**—where you never know what you may come back as in the next life. I didn't understand at first but over the years some uncanny things have happened here at Hollytrees, which take it from me really take some believing. But we get a fantastic amount of satisfaction from it. Most of our cases Mother Nature takes over and they are released in places we know that their own species exist. A supply of **GOOD** food, fresh running water, good habitat for insects, places where they will thrive. Of course some get released at Hollytrees where we always have fresh food available. Also the **WYTHALL ALLOTMENTS** are just across from us and the majority of the plot holders feed the birds who help keep the insects in check, so invariably our birds will end up over there.

I am still out doing my dog catching along with other volunteers from a super **VOLUNTARY** service called **DOGLOSTUK**. What fantastic work they do, and I'm their No.1 Dog Catcher, there is even a **CERTIFICATE** in our office to prove it! That all started when I had a bout of depression and I needed to escape from the hustle and bustle of this place, and my word did it work. It certainly did me the world of good. I was perfecting my skills to a T. Every dog and every situation is always totally different, but they nearly all go for **GOOD QUALITY** food and a cage or compound that is no threat to them i.e. entrance too or too confining. Once they enter the compound or the cage the remote controlled electromagnetic door lock, designed by our good friend Adam, which I can control whilst staying hidden, can be sprung. It's all nice, quiet and quick. Then the **PSYCHOLOGICAL** games begin. I leave the animal in there for a few minutes for it to realise and accept the fact that the animals **OWN** greed (for the good quality bait meat) has got it into that situation. I haven't chased it, demanded or begged it to go into the trap. Then I appear from the comfort of my vehicle and without talking to it I just throw more good food to it and walk away, posing **NO** threat at all. I'll then walk up as if I know the dog, still throwing bits of food and I sit down and in most cases the dog will come to investigate me and we'll begin to bond. Job done!

On the subject of unwanted and straying dogs, we have certainly noticed a **DECREASE** in the number of dogs and puppies coming through our gates. Most nowadays seem to end up on the internet for crazy asking prices, thankfully we still get the genuine cases and we help as many as we can accommodate at the centre. I know that since the Dogwarden Service was formed and brought into action some 40 years ago you no longer see packs of dogs running around where there may be a bitch in season. What a fantastic job they did and indeed continue to do. Not so long ago if you had a bitch needing to be spayed the dog warden would help via the council vet, usually going 50-50 with the costs. Sadly that seems to have ended however. Most of the vets we deal with do make concessions with unowned or stray animals, and of course the wildlife we bring to them.

I mentioned the Dog Wardens with a lump in my throat because without showing my age I can remember Birmingham employing their **FIRST** dog warden, way back in 1978. I was working for the **BIRMINGHAM PARKS DEPARTMENT** as a grounds man which I did from school. I did loads of rescue work in my 19 ½ years, I even lived in the Head Keepers lodge at what was the Birmingham Zoo on Pershore Road. The zoo had closed and it was handed back to the council to become the Birmingham Nature Centre. I lived there for 2 years in 1973-75 and I was allowed to use the facilities until such time that work needed to begin. Wow what a place that was. I had stray horses, goats, dogs, cats, all sorts of animals and birds. People would come from all over the city. I'll never forget those days. Even with looking after all the animals brought to me, I managed to find time to complete a 5 year apprenticeship at Kings Heath Park covering landscape groundsmanship, green keeping and tree surgery. I loved this little oasis the other side of a 10ft brick wall and just across the road from the famous Pebble Mill Studios, and we all know who was the **STAR** of that place, yes the fantastic animal lover and super hero, everyone's friend, the late **ED DOOLAN**. My word how I miss that **FANTASTIC** person. What an act to follow. You may remember in 1997 we had a nasty fire at Hollytrees, which whilst bad, could have been a lot worse. I was in total shock and couldn't understand **WHY** us?! I will never forget it as long as I live. We managed to save more animals and birds than we lost and it was thankfully confined to the very bottom of our site where we have **AVIARY** birds, feral cats in the stables, ducks and chickens amongst others. I kept saying **WHY HERE?** The cause was down to a small caravan we used to store donated items in. It had a door with a glass panel with a bulls-eye-bubble type of design and had curtains on the inside. Somehow the curtain came down and allowed the bulls-eye to work as a magnifying spot for the sun and up it went. It spread fairly rapidly. The press got to hear about it but who was the **FRIEND INDEED?** Yes young Ed. Ed ordered me to **PEBBLE MILL** and he took over. I'll never, ever forget what he did **OFF** air, let alone on air. I was still in shock but within hours he had the centre heaving with help! I couldn't believe what was happening how quickly. A friend of Ed's appeared 2 days later and asked if I could go down to the damaged area of the site with her to talk. She asked me to sit down, I didn't know what was going on but I soon discovered that she was from **DEVON** and had a sister living in **DARK LANE**, the next lane up from **PACKHORSE LANE**. She was from a **SPIRITUALIST CHURCH** right down in Devon and her sister had asked her to help me. Sure enough she did! Whilst I was sat down she performed what I learnt later to be **REIKI**, which

amazed me and seemed to lift so much pressure from me. I could feel things lifting and she never even touched me, what a relief was coming through her to me. And yes her sister was a huge fan of **ED DOOLAN—GOD BLESS HIM!** Christine, his good lady wife did him very proud from start to finish. I salute you!! And Ed will always be with us in our thoughts.

Can't mention Ed without mentioning that other bloke from the BBC, **ALAN DEDICOAT**, Terry Wogan's right hand man, nicknamed **DEADLY**, who Ed always looked after. Alan is also the person who called out the **WRONG** numbers on the Wednesday and Saturday nights lottery. Voice of the balls is what they call him! I'm happy to say we get on well, along with an older sister called Angela, who resides in Alvechurch, Worcestershire.

I'm going to stop shortly because I'm getting lost down memory lane. Some 45 years ago when I used to use The Veterinary Clinic on the Chester Road in Erdington. **JOHN SPEER, JOHN DAFT** and our super friend **HELEN WORSFOLD**. Those were the days. Helen used to spay and neuter my rescues free of charge as did John Speer who was known as the TV vet. We are still in contact with Helen and John her fireman husband. They now live down in **HOVE** in Sussex. I must add that nearly all vets fees frighten me. Insurance has its advantages but its not everyone who can afford the premiums! But that is another topic for another time.

Hollytrees, now that the car boot season is over, is having a **MINOR** panic attack. Over the years you good people have donated some quality items and through our **OLD MARKET** contacts have made some seriously good money towards the welfare of the animals in our care. However we are reaching capacity for storage of these donated items. We like the fact we don't give stuff away that has been donated to cover vet bills, feed bills, help people in dire straits keep their beloved pets at home. So for the time being we are not able to accept furniture or help with house clearances. Of course duvets, blankets, towels, newspaper and pet food donations are all still very gratefully received.

I promise I'm not going on for much longer but I would like to thank everyone who does **ANYTHING** to help the animals and birds here at **HOLLYTREES**. It doesn't matter to us how much you do, it all helps, and we've been told it helps you to do it. Take Eric, he only came to see if we had any small dogs needing a new home but ended up coming out to help us catch a cross terrier that had been all over Wythall, Hollywood, Maypole, for nearly 8 days! What a crafty little madam she was, but with Eric holding a 6ft high and 20 meter long net she gave herself up hiding between 2 wheelie bins. And yes Eric and his lady wife Anne, now own the little madam. Further more Eric is approaching 80 years and donates 3 days a week to our cause and he runs circles around me, I can't begin to keep up with him!

We are also a placement centre for students mainly from Solihull College and work experience from surrounding schools, who come for practical experience in the industry. They really do deserve a huge pat on the back. They often comment on the fact that every time they arrive they experience things you would never have thought of. One comment that really hit home to me was from a young lady who noted how different a boarding dog behaves opposed to a rescue dog, and the fact that the rescue dogs and indeed all the rescued animals and birds are that bit more

grateful and easier to work alongside. So thank you students, we very much appreciate your contribution to Hollytrees and when you've passed all your exams with flying colours don't forget us once you are earning mega bucks!

If I haven't mentioned you, rest assured I still think of you. When I receive any donations from you good people, I do my very best to answer you personally. However I've had an offer from a real honest friend who helps answer on my behalf. **SUE B** she's known as. She's a well organised person, unlike me, who has been a part of Hollytrees along with the rest of her family for a long time, I thank you all.

Ending on a few sad notes this year but we've lost one of our longest supporters in **GORDY HALL**. You may remember that we lost Josie Hall our groomer who would donate every Wednesday to us without fail offering her grooming services to our rescued dogs and cats. Well Gordy was her other half and it is with great sadness that we learnt that he had passed away. As well as being Josie's long suffering husband Gordy put a lot of time and effort into Hollytrees. I'll never forget one time he was helping put the roofing panels on our Farside kennel blocks. Well I turn around for a minute and would you believe it Laura, my middle daughter who must have only been about 5 years old at the time followed him up the ladders and onto the roof!! Wrong time for Ann to come over and see what she was getting up to! Ann panicked of course and called her down but Gordy bless him shouted back "Don't worry Ann, I'll look after her!" and from that day onwards the pair of them were like two peas in a pod. Gordy would come into Hollytrees and immediately ask **WHERE'S MY MATE LAURA?!** We'll miss you Gordy but know you are always with us in spirit.



Another sad bit of news to announce, we lost one of our Golden Oldies this year. **OLIVER**, an 18 year old greyhound, who was initially rehomed via us as a youngster before coming back an old man after his owner passed away. He was worshipped by one of our long suffering helpers Jayne who lives down the road. She would visit and take him out multiple times a day, he couldn't go to live with her unfortunately but she made sure he felt as much love as possible. He will very much be missed.

We've lost many friends this year sadly. Members, donators, volunteers, well wishers, too many to name. Your kind support over

the many years we have been here now is what is keeping us going today. Rest assured everything you've done for us is appreciated more than I can adequately put into words. You're always in the thoughts of the people here and the animals are all benefiting from your generosity year after year, case after case. Your support has meant that all those rescued animals mentioned earlier in the newsletter had a place to be given a fighting chance, a place to feel safe and loved. I know you're all here with us in spirit.

A huge thank you as always to our staff; Tracy, Wendy, Sophie and not forgetting Adam, my own family, in-laws and all. They all help run this busy but productive little centre.

Wishing you all a very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

God bless you one and all.

## Ray Dediccoat

P.s. I hope you like the card we have put together.

On the front of the card starting from the top left we have a litter of kittens that were found abandoned in an alley way. Underneath that is Ann's horse **Tyson** meeting the new donkey **Dolly**. On the other side is one of the owls we reared this year, lovingly called **Owlie**, now released back into the wild. Underneath that are our Shetland ponies enjoying some hay during the bad snow we had earlier in the year. Of course in the middle you can see me in my favourite place—the sofa in the house! Surrounded by our dogs going left to right; Star, Pup-pup, Annie (hiding between Roshi and I), Roshi and not forgetting the old lady Casey lay on the floor.

On the back of the card top row starting from the left we have two Guinea Pigs that we rehomed to our friend Jayne, getting ready for Christmas. Then **Luna** who we rescued from an abusive home looking settled on a walk in the park. Next we have **Stella** my daughter Wendy's horse enjoying some hay in the snow. Then there is a litter of baby hedgehogs that were found under a shed, Little Sue came to the rescue there.

Middle row starting from the left we have a **Jay bird** that we reared from a baby trying to take a bite out of my ear!! Then we have **Lola** a young sheepdog that we rehomed when the owners suddenly had to relocate to another country. Next we have two of the baby hedgehogs hand reared by Little Sue starting to feed for themselves. Then we have an African Grey parrot that we took after the owner developed serious illnesses due to the dust they produce, he has now moved into a home where they had a parrot who needed a companion, it's working out lovely.

Bottom row on the left we have a **Trumpeter pigeon** that was brought to us by a member of the public after it was caught by some kind of bird of prey. It took a while but **Pingu**, as we called him, has made a full recovery. In the other corner is one of the moles we had brought in this year. Such fascinating creatures to look after.

