



# Tower Hill Stables Animal Sanctuary

## *Annual Newsletter – Christmas 2021*

I remember starting to write the 2020 annual newsletter and thinking about what a mad year it had been ...and I'm getting a terrible sense of Déjà vu...

After almost 2 years of the pandemic and economic downturn the best news is that we still continue to be here for the animals. How long that can continue in the current climate is anyone's guess. In the meantime, here is what has been going on!

So starting at the beginning of the year, well actually just at the end of 2020, we were contacted by a lady who was desperate to save a horse at her stable yard who had been marked for euthanasia. In fact the vet was already booked to come out in a few days' time.

The story went that the mare in question had been bought by someone from a horse dealer as a 'solid' riding pony and appeared to be just that when she was delivered to the yard. However over the next few weeks, she had become increasingly difficult to manage and despite the best efforts of the handlers at the yard, the mare had been deemed as being "dangerous" and so the decision had been taken to end her life. It was assumed that she had probably been doped up on arrival to make it seem that she was more docile than she actually was – sadly this a reasonably common practice by unscrupulous horse dealers.



One of the ladies at the yard was horrified that the mare was going to be killed and reached out to Fiona to see if we could help. Blossom, (as we called her) arrived on New Year's Day 2021.

Blossom seemed pretty calm to us when she arrived and went to live with the main gang of horses at the new farm site where she had acres to explore.

Jumping forward 5 months [insert tape winding forward fast sound] the reason for Blossom's "difficult" behaviour at her previous yard became apparent as one day, whilst doing her rounds of the fields at Gracedale in her little truck, Fiona was amazed to see that Blossom had had a baby!

It was hardly a surprise then that she had not wanted to be ridden when purchased as she was 4 months pregnant!

The little foal was attracting considerable interest from the cows and other horses, so we decided to separate them from the others to prevent any accidents. Blossom and her baby stayed out in the *River Field* together with Boraj, a lovely gelding who had become friends with Blossom and who taken on the role of Foaly's surrogate Dad and protector.



Sadly, fate intervened and both Mum & baby became poorly ☹️ - The vet diagnosed a chronic infection in Blossom and this seemed to have been passed to baby and taken root in her hind leg at the joint. Our vet was fearful that the infection had got into the bone of the joint and if it that was the case it would then in all likelihood be the end for Foaly.

Both were treated with antibiotics and we brought them back down the fields to a large barn – Boraj too as he wouldn't leave their sides.



Blossom responded well to treatment, but things were not looking good for little Foaly. The infection in her hock was so bad that our vet suggested letting her go as he had very little hope of her getting over it – in fact he only gave her a 5% chance if we started with quite aggressive treatments. We wanted to give her a chance so we started the daily vet visits which persisted for a week. Daily and very strong antibiotics were given intravenously and her badly swollen hock was injected with local pain killer and then flushed with saline – it was very tough on baby, but she was very brave. After a few



days of this treatment, our vet reassessed Foaly's chances to 20%, then 50% then after 10 days 80%+

Finally, the swelling went down and brave Foaly was once again jumping about and on the way to a full recovery. It was a very traumatic and emotional time for everyone and we are very grateful to our vet and his nurse for their sterling work.



As you may have seen on our social media we have over the past few years converted the woodland at the farm site into new "Piggy" areas. The wooded section of the farm is right at the North Easterly edge of the land and quite isolated. As such, we needed to ensure that our **Piggy Fencing** was of an industrial nature as Pigs are great at digging and generally destroying everything! With the fencing complete – which was extremely expensive - we have created 3 separate areas now & the whole area is called Piglet Wood. The first two areas are home to Blossom and Hope and their respective families, plus a few other pigs that were successfully integrated into one of the families – Hope & Blossom's families [aka the Sharks & the Jets] will not live together under any circumstances – we tried – as did their previous carers – but they won't settle and we don't want to risk injury – Pigs will ALWAYS fight to establish the hierarchy whenever a new pig or pigs are introduced and 99% of the time no significant injuries occur prior to one party or the other backing down – however it appears that Hope & Blossom's gangs are the exception that proves the rule! – They remain in separate sections of Piglet Wood.



With the completion of the third area it was time to move Dumbleboar and his brothers,

Reggie, Geoff and Boary McBoarface to the woods! They have a neat house and tons of room to explore & plenty of trees and shrubs to play in – but they mostly choose to sleep!

When we first started the Sanctuary and for about the first 10 years, everything was done by hand – this became tougher and tougher as the Sanctuary grew and eventually we saw the light and managed to get a little tractor – as we have continued to expand, particularly with the new farm site, we have been forced to “*industrialise*” to a certain degree and invest in more vehicles, without which we simply would not be able to function. We have 3 small tractors now, 2 diggers, a Telehandler, a Bobcat and Fiona’s little “mule” which she uses 24/7 to drive round the farm site, checking fences and carrying feed.

The muck heap at the farm site has to be taken away weekly as the hard standing is scraped down twice a day with the Tractors and with 130 “large” animals eating and, well you know – we have to clear up 7 TONS of manure a day + the spoilt bedding – that’s 50 TONS a week – so even taking it away weekly is 2 and a half trailer loads and it all costs money to have this done – These are costs that people do not often consider when thinking about running a Sanctuary.

The other consideration is that “farm vehicles” tend to be expensive to repair and so when we found one of our little tractors with a blown rear tyre, we were horrified to find how expensive tractor tyres are! Initially we were even more concerned when we were told that our tractor was so old (lol) that no manufacturer made that specific size tyre anymore ☹️

Managed to find one on ebay... in Poland, so we gave that a miss, but spoke to a tyre manufacturer who was very helpful and managed to find an ever so slightly different size tyre that would fit our wheel – it did, but was £328!



Bartholomew Hornblower arrived at the sanctuary unexpectedly as he had overheard his owners arranging for him to be sent to slaughter. Bart was a young Highland Cow but whose horns had grown very quickly and so wide (for his age) in fact that getting him down the slaughter corridor was going to be tricky – what a result for Bart.

The owner had previously re-homed elderly Highland Cows with Fiona and so given the predicament, we were asked if we would



take him. Bart was very surprised when he was unloaded into a field with 14 others of his kind!

You may have watched the Panorama expose of the Race Horse industry this year on TV as it is one of those things they don't want the general public to be "*aware of*", but so many horses end up in abattoirs either as not having made the grade (been fast enough), injured or having come to the end of their "useful" life and in a world that carries no passengers, they are quietly "got rid".

Some are fortunate enough to find their ways to sanctuaries and this year we took in 4 more ex-race horses to add to the 4 we rescued last year.

Louis, Adrianna and just a few weeks ago Lily, plus yesterday (as I type this) Red arrived (pictured)

Red is a 5 year old race horse who has developed a problem with his "gait" known as Stringhalt. It means he has from time to time a peculiar movement with his hind leg – meaning of course that he can no longer be trained or raced, so he was going to be put down.



Red came off of the horse box he arrived in on 2 legs – literally exploded out of the vehicle as these animals can be like coiled springs – thankfully the others quickly re-assured him and he settled in a barn with the Highland Cows to talk to over the internal "wall".

These sorts of horses need extra care as being "*finer*" they are not OK to be left to their own devices as part of the main herd- i.e. they can't really "winter out", they will feel the cold more and need rugs on in the colder weather. They are also much more used to a daily routine and therefore generally cope better when stabled. These sorts of rescues take a disproportionate amount of time to care for compared to say a Welsh mountain pony who would be quite happy to live in the herd over winter with access to barns should they wish to get out of the wind & rain.

Earlier in the year, Pippin the Turkey was found lying at the side of the road in Norfolk. She was spotted in a ditch on her side and clearly in a state of distress.

One of her legs was bad and she couldn't stand. We can only theorise as to how she came to be there, but thankfully the lady who spotted her took her home and sought veterinary advice and nursed her over the next few weeks. As soon as Pippin was able to stand comfortably she was brought into the Sanctuary where she joined the Turkey gang 😊



One of the more unusual happenings at the Sanctuary this year was the arrival of Binkle & Flip. We had noticed that a wild Mallard had made a nest at the back of one of the outbuildings and was sitting on her eggs. Being a wild bird, we left her well alone. However a few weeks later we heard the tiny chirping of chicks! Not ducklings!! – On investigating we found that Mrs Duck had hatched open 2 Chicken eggs that a wily Hen must have laid in her nest whilst she was off looking for food.

As there were still unhatched Duck eggs in the nest, we left her alone on the nest with her 2 chicks named Binkle & Flip, but as a precaution and for the safety of mum & babies, we wired the shed up so that the sanctuary cats couldn't get in, as chicks would be fair game for the feral cats or other predators at night.



A few days later, a duckling hatched out too – Django. No further eggs hatched and Mrs Duck dutifully cared for all 3 of her babies. Ducklings grow very fast, much faster than chicks and it wasn't long before it was time to undo the wire and let them all out – we had of course to catch Binkle & Flip and put them into a hutch to continue growing as Django was soon following Mum onto the pond and that wouldn't have been particularly wise for the two chicks. Binkle & Flip are still too small to let out right now, but are in a hutch near the pond & Django has been

seen sitting next to the hutch during the day.

In addition to the colossal amount of work involved in preparing Piglet Wood, we have also been very busy continuing with the refurbishment of the new farm site. It hadn't been used for livestock for some time and was in desperate need of updating with everything from electrics, fencing, gates, hard standing – the list goes on! We also had to raise the height of



some of the concrete standing areas due to flooding, as the angle of the land drives the water towards some of the shelter areas and with some of the deluges we have been experiencing earlier in the year, we had to act. Raising the ground by 3 inches made all the difference as the water flows past now keeping the bedding in these areas dry.

We also just started work on refurbishing the area that the 5 boars live in (John, Paul, George, Ringo & Joey) and hope to have completed the ground works in the next few weeks.

Nibbles the sheep came up with an excellent fund raising scheme by giving taxi rides to hens – although so far this hasn't really worked out as the hens refuse to carry cash & he doesn't have a card machine.

So Nibbles had another think and came up with the idea that people could help by becoming a Bread Run Volunteer.

As you may know, we are able to collect a car load of 'on date' bread and produce from a Supermarket in Brentwood on a daily basis and this goes a long way towards feeding our 100+ rescued pigs.



We have a Facebook group called "**Bread Run Volunteers**" and the folk in the group take turns to do what we call the "Bread Run" – which essentially means driving to Brentwood, collecting the food & then driving it to the Sanctuary.

This is all fine and dandy if you live near enough to do this occasionally, but what if you live in Alberta? Well this is where Nibbles' idea is a touch of genius – He says you can still become a Bread Run Volunteer – regardless of where you live! – OK, well he calls it a "*Virtual Bread Run Volunteer*" It is far easier than doing the actual Bread Run as you simply have to "*pretend*" to do the bread run.

OK so I can hear you thinking, so how does that help? – Well, and as Nibbles deduced all by himself, if you *actually DID the bread run* you would need to spend money on petrol to do it – probably at least £10 depending on where you live (more if you do live in Alberta!) – although by the time I've finished typing this it will be £11 at the rate of recent increase!



So – all you in fact need to do is to “pretend” to do the bread run once a month and take out a standing order for the amount you would have spent on petrol had you of actually lived close enough to do it and your donation will be used to help us feed the animals – genius ☺

It’s also a *very green solution* as by not driving you are not increasing your carbon footprint *AND* you can be doing something else instead – “multitasking even ;)

Another great way to help, without costing you a thing, is to use “easyfundraising” whenever you shop online. Basically, if you sign up with them (details on our website and below), then whenever you buy anything online from one of the participating retailers (about 4000) then you generate a commission payment for the animals – doesn’t cost you anything and the item you are buying is no more expensive that it would be if you weren’t using easyfundraising – Seems too good to be true, but it works!

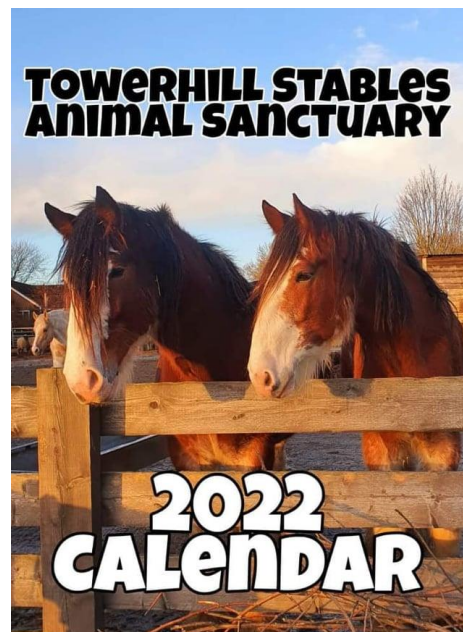
You can sign up to Easyfundraising at this link – its FREE!

<https://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/towerhillstables/>

Our 2022 Calendar is available at this link too <https://www.towerhillstables.org/2022-calendar> and would be a great way to introduce a friend or colleague to the work that we do

As I mentioned at the start of this Newsletter, 2021 has been another very difficult year and the ongoing global situation has had a dramatic effect on many organisations with a reduction of support across the board.

We do what we can to promote the sanctuary and the work that Fiona does on our social media, but don’t spend as much time on that as we probably should as we simply don’t have the time. It’s a real problem as when we do spend time on that, Facebook & Instagram really limit our “reach” of who sees the posts and pictures ...unless of course you pay them...



Fiona even had her own race organised this year in the Sahara Desert – called the **Running for Good Ultra Event**, it was the next phase of Fiona’s promotion of a cruelty free lifestyle – You’ve seen the film, read the book – now you can take part in the race!

By the way if you have yet to see the film, it is streaming on Amazon Prime for FREE and is called **Running for Good** and tells Fiona’s story so far, encompassing the Sanctuary and her gaining no less than 4 Guinness World Records in marathon running – despite having a knee replacement! It also follows her across the Saraha Desert and includes some spectacular scenery



Fiona's book is called Running for Good – The Fiona Oakes Story and signed copies are available from our website here <https://www.towerhillstables.org/book-calendar> all proceeds to the animals of course.

Fiona's ultra event took place in October – although this year due to all the travel restrictions was only run by Moroccan nationals with everyone else participating “virtually” – i.e. running their own race locally & uploading their results to a website – more details at the race website here <https://www.runningforgoodultra.com/>

We will continue to provide a home to the rescued animals whilst ever we are able to do so and we hope that the coming year will see increasing support for what we do.

If you are already helping us with the colossal feed costs on a regular or irregular basis we can't thank you enough, we wouldn't be able to do this without you.

If you are perhaps thinking of monthly support, it can be from just £1 a month and our Bank Details to set up a standing order are:

**Account Name: Tower Hill Stables**

**Sort Code: 09 01 26**

**Account Number: 58622475**

Or via PayPal to [fiona@towerhillstables.com](mailto:fiona@towerhillstables.com)

The donation details are all on the website at this link

<https://www.towerhillstables.org/donate-1>



Wishing you all a peaceful time this Christmas and we'll all keep our fingers, hooves, paws & claws crossed for things to improve in 2022



**All best wishes**  
**On behalf of Fiona & the gang**  
**Tower Hill Stables Animal Sanctuary**