

Buttercups Sanctuary for Goats

The Friends Newsletter Summer / Autumn 2010

I must apologise for the delay in sending this Newsletter. The time for creating the summer edition just disappeared with the hay making and since then I have not been able to catch up with myself. I have now burnt the midnight oil and set the alarm for an early rise and brought together an almost double issue. I hope that you will forgive this delay and enjoy reading about some of the mischievous antics with which our four legged friends delight in creating.

Dennis

I had just returned from the stables having put the goats to bed for the night and was looking forward to half an hours sit before I was informed that the police from a neighbouring town had telephoned to say that they had found a small pigmy goat, and that they were on their way over with it; So much for that valued half hours relaxation! By the time I had prepared a spare pen in the stables and returned home the time was well passed 10 pm.

After a short wait and a quick cup of tea, a police car arrived with two very red faced officers inside. They had spent some considerable time with the residents from half the neighbourhood of the housing estate chasing this poor goat, trying to capture it. It bounded from one garden to the next, so the posse of frantic pursuers gathered in numbers. Being very young and with survival being its only aim in life, its agility was far greater than any of its pursuers. It jumped with ease from coal bunker, garden shed, over and through fences, washing lines and vegetable gardens. Despite his aptitude for freedom he was eventually cornered and captured.

In the back of the police car attached to the rear seat by a dog collar and lead, *Dennis* stood trembling in sheer fright. He was about six or eight months old, grey and white, with small buds for horns. He was entire, which meant that in the very near future he was destined for a visit to the vets. Not to chance a second attempt at escape I carried him very close to my chest the short distance along the road to the Sanctuary stables and his pen. He had companions on either side of him, their snuffles and snores and night time movements would help him settle and put him at his ease. The following morning when served his morning meal, the door was opened and probably thinking that he was about to be chased again he took off climbing up the wall. To his surprise he suddenly found himself in the neighbouring pen standing in between two very elderly and somewhat bewildered maiden goats who looking down wondering from where this young upstart had suddenly materialised from. Later that day, Dennis had his appointment with the Sanctuary doctor. That settled him down for a few hours! The days passed, and on every occasion the volunteers would try to get near him for a stroke or tentively to give him the corner of a biscuit. It was obvious that he had received very little humane attention and had at some time in his very short life experienced a very traumatic experience.

About a week later I was sitting down eating my mid day meal when there was a knock on the door from a passer by to say that a goat was out, last seen disappearing at great speed up the road. "Oh dear, I thought, here we go again". In the middle of the road stood a lonely and bewildered looking Dennis. I took a few

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steps forward. He took a few steps back. He stood looking at me. I took a few more, steps as did Dennis. It was obviously stale mate. I decided to call his bluff and took a dozen steps back. He followed hesitatingly but as I continued back up the road to the Sanctuary entrance so he trotted behind. All seemed well. Only about another twenty paces to go and he would be at the gate, he would recognise the entrance and in he would trot... I thought.

Just at that critical moment two cyclists came down the road towards us, heads down and pedalling as fast as their legs would take them. My hand signals made little difference until the very last moment, when quickly looking up they saw in front of them a demented looking lunatic in the middle of the road frantically jumping up and down waving his arms in the air.

This sudden moment of panic at least made them attempt to slow down and apply their brakes. This emergency action from both bikes provided a sideways skid and a high screech of brake pads. That was enough for Dennis; he had had enough, he was off. Before I realised what had happened and could set off in pursuit he had gained a good fifty yards start. Feeling quite pleased with myself that I was not losing ground in the pursuit and that I was at least keeping a constant distance between us. I wondered how long I could keep this up before he set off across the open fields and freedom. Suddenly the entrance to our neighbours farm yard appeared, so with trepidation and hope I slowed to a walk, and to my relief so did Dennis. Thankfully the yard was empty of farm life and I was able to keep him down at a slow walk. This was an ideal situation to get him cornered and I was hoping that someone would appear from around the corner to help apprehend him.

He fled through the yard, and still no chance of capture. Beyond was a maze of horticultural Polly tunnels and row upon row of exotic potted plants all neatly set behind walls of plastic wind breaks. What a haven for a goat to be loose in! My heart missed a number of beats and I wondered what had I done in my past life to be worthy of such a misdemeanour. From a distance Dennis had set his eyes upon this paradise for all goats and now set off at a steady and determined trot. I realised that it would be my worst nightmare if I let him slow down for the briefest of moments I kept him at a steady walk, first up one poly tunnel and then once reaching the open end turning and walking down the adjoining tunnel. This situation continued for the next twenty minutes or so. Each time, on every turn I was hoping that someone would be there to help me corner this miscreant. Upon emerging from the last poly tunnel Denis decided once again to take off into the unknown. At this moment the farmers wife came around the corner of the yard and at a glance very quickly took in the situation that was confronting her. Leaving the garden gate open and taking a few steps back she waited for Dennis to come forward to investigate. With her portly figure in front of him and me coming up from behind breathing heavily, he decided the best way of escape was to head sideways through the open gate. Now he was confronted with a vegetable garden or the flower beds, what a decision to have to make! The gate was now silently closed behind him and his means of escape was gone. The farmer having finished his lunch and wondering what all the commotion was outside had now joined the fray.

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The vegetable garden seems like fun! Up one row of spuds, round the raspberry canes, through the rhubarb, across the carrots and beetroot and why not investigate the flower garden while we are here? Across the lawn and into the bushes; *they can't possibly find me here*. Crawling on my hands and knees, getting my coat caught on branches and all kinds of thing descending down my neck, Dennis takes the advantage and shoots out of cover heading back for the gate and for freedom.

By the time the three of us had gained the upper ground and had started to close in, Dennis had recovered from his surprise at finding the gate closed to him and had turned around to face his pursuers. Now, well and truly cornered by myself, the farmer and his wife, all with heads down, legs and arms outstretched we moved in crocodile formation towards him. Dennis also stood defiantly facing us, with both his front legs stretched out straight in front of him with his head down showing us his most defiant stare, with tail and rear end uppermost. Choosing his moment carefully he launched himself almost vertically four feet off the ground towards the farmers wife and myself.

Expecting such action, but at the same time taken completely by surprise by his agility, we both launched ourselves at him. With flailing arms we collided shoulder to shoulder but each with a foot or part of a foot in each hand. I walked back along the road to the Sanctuary, Dennis nestled contentedly (and securely) in my arms. Upon opening the field gates I put his four feet gently on the ground. With a sudden bound into the air, twisting and kicking out his back legs he ran off into the field and within a short moment his head was down grazing as though nothing had taken place!!!

Lottie

A phone call one day from a good a "Good Samaritan" in Lincoln sent our alarm bells ringing. They asked could we help with a nanny goat that had been tethered for four years in a back garden. There was an old lean too that the goat had been able to use to protect her from the worst of the weather, household rubbish had been thrown into the yard, and the goat was having to walk in amongst it all. The owner had then sold the house, moved out and left the goat behind. The neighbour kept an eye on the goat and we arrived just two days later. After a very long and tiring journey two of our volunteers brought her back to Buttercups.

Lottie, a beautiful black four year old Alpine, with white markings on the tips of her ears, white stripes on either side of her face from eyes to nose, on the tip of her tail and down all four legs. Lottie surprisingly was in fair condition, although thin for her size her coat sported a healthy black sheen. Her feet had never been trimmed and were very overgrown. The day after her arrival she had a pedicure and was wormed for any internal parasites, together with a check for lice. Lottie was then set free to join the others. She stood for a long time just watching all of the other goats around her, slowly taking in the situation and that she was with other animals of her kind. She stood perfectly still, her ears erect, occasionally her head jerked left to right to take in a sudden interaction between some of the other goats. Every now and then one of the others out of curiosity would saunter over to say hallo, almost nose to nose. With this interaction Lottie would rear up, balancing on her hind legs and then

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come back down onto her front feet, just missing the others head by a fraction. All that day, and for many days after, she behaved as if she were a young kid. Lottie would have moments when she would run out from the stables into the field to be with the other goats and then suddenly take off and come running back with her ears standing alert and upright. Then she would run around the yard and hay racks, before pulling up sharp in front of us and then taking off again. She has now become used to her name being called. When all the herd are in the field with their heads down busily grazing and you call her name she will pick her head up, take note of your direction and then come running over to be with you. This reaction is more than likely encouraged due to volunteers having the occasional treat secreted in their pockets and giving her a little more attention than most. Lottie likes to have her full day and will be out as late as possible and is one of the last to go into her stall at night. When her turn comes you just walk up to her and put an arm around her neck and, guiding her she will take you to her stall. She has now been with us for just two months and has settled in as if she had been with us for some years. Every day Lottie shows to every one how grateful and pleased she is to have her freedom, companionship and above all... love.

Donations

Many Thanks to all of you who over the summer months raised funds for Buttercups. This has been in so many varied ways. For example, the proceeds from a coffee morning. A Spinners Group who sold some of their wool in aid of Buttercups. A walking day, a charity stall at a fair. Collecting small change and many other ideas have brought financial help for the many goats in our care. We appreciate very much the help that many of you give in providing whatever support you can.

Did you know....

Goats have slit shaped horizontal pupils in their eyes? This gives them all round vision covering 320 – 340 degrees. They can see virtually all around them without having to move. Therefore you cannot sneak up on a goat. Remember that originally goats came from the wild before they were domesticated so they needed this extra vision to help them escape from their predators. Humans have only 160 – 210 degree vision. Try holding your hands up to your face and hold them to the extent of your vision and then hold them about six inches away from your face to see how limited your vision is. Their eyes are extremely perceptive to strong light and their pupils become closed more tightly during the day to restrict light. Natures way of providing in built sun glasses. At night or when it is dark their pupils become almost rectangular they can then see better still.

Mungo, Midge, Elvis & Fauna

About two months ago we had four new arrivals from the Sussex Wildlife Trust. Three boys named Mungo, Midge and Elvis and one girl named Fauna. They had been used as a conservation project to help keep overgrowth under control on the Surrey

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Downs heath land. Originally there were many more of them in the herd but due to horrific dog attacks the numbers had been reduced, leaving just the four. Elvis only just survived a horrendous attack, having suffered the loss of an ear and terrible wounds to his throat. Midge also survived but was left with wounds and a shredded ear. As these attacks had been ongoing for some time it was decided by the friends and volunteers to find them a new home where they could live out the rest of their days in peace and security.

They had roamed practically wild and free for all of their lives, so it was expected that it would take a long time to get their trust and friendship. We knew that it would be impossible to expect them to go anywhere near a stable let alone to be actually enclosed in one. Fauna the female, lost her sister a few years previously and had always remained aloof and distant. She followed the boys around following her natural instincts of being part of a small herd. So when she arrived at Buttercups we let her out into the field on her own to mix with the main herd and to settle down with all of the other goats around her.

The boys were a different story. The only form of shelter we had available was an open ended hay barn and a large shed situated next to another stable block some two fields away from the main herd. Here we have a small herd of ten males specifically for the situation of receiving entire billys. Mungo, Midge and Elvis were released from the trailer and settled down straightaway with all of the other boys. At night the others went into their individual pens and the three boys, after having an evening meal were happy to settle down for the night in the open ended barn. Early each morning all three could be seen at the far end of the field with their heads down grazing. At the sound of the field gate being opened, heralding the arrival of the morning volunteer, all three would immediately come running over side by side calling out a welcome.

Mungo, Midge and Elvis always had an evening meal after the others had gone to bed. After a few weeks Elvis was given his evening meal close to the stable door and after a few nights we placed it inside. Then a few feet down the corridor until we were eventually able to close the stable door. This became the evening routine and he soon accepted this as his norm. A week later when putting them away for the night we found Mungo and Midge in one of the double pens. We quickly shut the door and they settled down for the night. I think that we can now safely say that all three males have now completely lost their feral instincts and settled down with the rest of the herd. Fauna has taken a little longer, but has now settled into the routine of going down the corridor to get her evening meal, which gives us the opportunity for us to close the door on her. She has the opportunity of either sleeping on a straw bed in the corridor or jumping over into one of the other pens and sharing a bed with one of the others.

How rewarding it is to know that at least these four will no longer have the experience of sleeping another winter outside in the open and fending for themselves.

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Put Your Money where Your Mouth Is

Three days ago I received a telephone call from John Cameron on behalf of the BBC who were completing a series of antique programmes called "Put your money where your mouth is" and would we be interested in participating. He had purchased a porcelain figure named "The boy and Goat" manufactured by Lladrow, of which there was only a limited number produced. The theme for the programme is that two dealers be given an amount of money to purchase antiques and then to sell them to specialists. The dealer who makes the largest profit wins.

The director and producer, film cameraman and John Cameron arrived at the Sanctuary on a cloudy afternoon. Most days the herd of over one hundred goats are allowed into the adjoining field to graze, but this being a special occasion they were all kept in the main paddock. The goats were all waiting near the main gate to welcome the BBC crew.

Having shown the BBC team around the sanctuary, they filmed many of the goats as they went. It was decided to keep the business of filming away from the herd and to do it at the furthest corner of the field. I was miked up and the plan of events was discussed; it was time to *take one*. A few moments into John Cameron's introduction, he suddenly jumped into the air giving a high pitched shriek uttering words that I am unable to print. One of the pigmy goats had walked silently up behind him and given him a nip on the bottom. *Take two*. The introduction was over and I was half way through my response when a low flying jet came over. *Take three*, during which the Air Ambulance helicopter flew over. *Take four*, this time all runs perfectly well — great. Thank goodness that was all over.

Take again please!! What does one do with ones hands, do you keep them behind you, fold them in front of you, put them in your pockets! They seem to belong to someone else and tend to flap about. Everything is repeated over again. "Take again please". This was becoming somewhat frustrating as I had to try and remember the same sequence and actions of the previous interviews. After four film takes I asked; why so many? I was told that the first was of John and I together. The second was concentrating on Johns close up reaction, the third was on myself, and the fourth was taken of us both together from a different position, but all taken with sound recordings. They then choose the better of all the sound recordings or parts of and then join in shots from all the other film takes. All quite exhausting, but extremely interesting. The last shots were taken of John Cameron feeding the goats with a bucket of cut bread. You can imagine the stamped of over one hundred goats being offered one solitary bucket of food. The viewing of this should be very amusing to see.

I have personally purchased on behalf of Buttercups this beautiful bust of a child, holding a goatling round his neck. It stands about 15 inches high and is coloured. It was produced by Lladrow between 1970 and 1981 and is a limited edition. For further information please look them up on the internet. I have already fallen in love with it, but the purpose of the filming as explained in the interview is to sell the bust and to give the proceeds to Buttercups. If you are interested in providing an offer for the bust I shall be advertising it on our website, or please contact me direct.

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Help Us

"All in a Day", the DVD of a day at Buttercups, shows the hard work of its many dedicated volunteers as well as the love and care enjoyed by the goats. What it does is to highlight how gentle, amusing, intelligent and of course mischievous goats really can be. Follow the daily routine of a visit to the vets, hay making in the heat of August, a visit to one of the many Foster homes for medical care, an insight into what the goats get up to during the day and much more. Available through our shop.

Our first two goats were rescued in 1989, but Buttercups Sanctuary for Goats was not created as a Registered Charity until 2003. We have at present in the region of 120 goats housed at the sanctuary with a further 80 belonging to the sanctuary in Foster Homes in Kent and Sussex. Very seldom does a day go by when we do not receive a telephone call asking for help in re-homing goats or to help with problems. Buttercups is a young and innovative charity and its organisation is growing year by year. Fortunately many individuals and organisations can see the necessity for such a charity and are extremely generous in their support. Its future however must never be taken for granted and the present situation finds the Trust at a point where it needs to expand to survive. This cannot take place unless you as an individual are prepared to help by thinking of us in your will. By remembering us in your will you can enable us to continue and extend our work to protect the goats that need our help.

If you wish to amend an existing will all you need do is to add your request, sign your amendment and have two witness signatures. To ensure our future, please give us your support now.

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