

Oxfordshire Branch

July 2009



Carrdus Schoolgirl raises money for Oxfordshire Animals

Congratulations and our thanks to Annabel Boden, a pupil at Carrdus School, near Banbury. At the school charity sales day, on Friday 26th June, Annabel decided to support Oxfordshire RSPCA and, with the help of her friends, Holly Mystkowski and Charlotte Brownhill, raised £52.44 from collections and the sale of RSPCA goods.

Annabel cares passionately for animals and was delighted to have helped local animals in distress. We are delighted to have people like Annabel to help our efforts.

Elaine Hopes (Administrator) tel 01235 816441
07791 292635
elainehopes@hotmail.co.uk

Sarah Twist (Fostering Co-ordinator)
tel 07879 861941
sarah.twist2@ntlworld.com

Katherine Morris (Microchipping Co-ordinator)
tel 01993 813701
katherine.morris@mansfield.ox.ac.uk

Elaine Hopes (Welfare Assistance) tel 01235 816441
07791 292635
elainehopes@hotmail.co.uk

Francesca Iaria (Newsletter Editor) tel 01865 451344
07871 662204
frankikki@yahoo.co.uk



Pictured from left to right
Holly Mystkowski, Charlotte Brownhill and Annabel
Boden

**We have monthly meetings on the
third Tuesday of every month in
Woodstock Church hall from 7pm -
All are welcome.**

Down on Willow Farm by Nigel Wild (Oxford Times 30/06/09)

The origins of the RSPCA date back almost 200 years. In 1822, MP Richard Martin, dubbed 'Humanity Dick', piloted the first anti-cruelty bill through Parliament, giving a degree of protection to horses, cattle and sheep.

At the time, compassion for animals was seen as bizarre; for the public, animals were merely sources of food or transport, or for use in sport. With 22 others, Martin founded the Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, with the primary aim of changing people's indifference to animal cruelty. Such was their success that in 1840, Queen Victoria granted permission to add Royal to their title.

Today, the RSPCA is not only a national organisation with an annual budget of £82m, but a household name in animal welfare. All its funds come from donations. But, as I discovered from Oxfordshire's Ingrid Smith (pictured) and Elaine Hopes, the many branches of the RSPCA are essentially satellite organisations. They run Willow Farm, the rehoming centre for the Oxfordshire branch of the RSPCA, on the outskirts of Chilton.



"People think of the RSPCA as one big organisation," said Elaine. "But each branch is a separate entity affiliated to the main body and operating under its rules. It is the national body that employs the inspectors and animal welfare officers and runs hospitals, care centres and sanctuaries throughout UK. The national organisation could not afford to run the branches, so we are each set up as our own registered charity, with our own trustees and our own funds. Because we run under national rules, we can call ourselves RSPCA."

Ingrid added: "The setup directly affects our operations. The inspectors and officers are paid by the national body and they are the ones who bring us animals to look after. We cannot take animals direct from the public, or wild animals of any kind. We received £20,000 from the RSPCA's regional organisation when we established Willow Farm, but we have to raise our own running costs. Because most people are not aware that it is not just one big organisation, they think donating to the RSPCA helps to fund us and it doesn't."

Ingrid owns Willow Farm and manages the rehoming centre built there two years ago, thanks to a sizable donation which gave them both capital and ongoing income from investments. In pride of place is the Ritz of catteries, gleaming wipe-down vinyl walls, centrally-heated and double-glazed sleeping quarters and airy runs with mesh windows. A mini-estate of hutches and runs houses rabbits and guinea pigs. Two horses and a miniature Shetland share the adjacent fields with some of Ingrid's own horses.

The centre's 'tenants' are mainly cats, rabbits and guinea pigs, with space for a few horses. Willow Farm sees the occasional rodent, overspill from South Buckinghamshire branch, which is forever oversubscribed with rats and hamsters.

The farm cannot take dogs. Proximity to the village rules that out on noise grounds alone, but a major reason is the level of care that dogs need. "Looking after a dog takes ten times the effort for a cat," Ingrid said. "We would need twice the staff and a whole lot more money." Instead, dogs are taken to Blackberry Farm, a national centre near Aylesbury. Animals are taken in by the RSPCA for any number of reasons — cruelty or neglect, stray or abandoned, owners unable to cope.

Fortunately, cruelty and deliberate neglect are rare, but the recent case of the horse dealer in Buckinghamshire has focused attention on the RSPCA. Boarding and veterinary fees alone for the rescued horses have so far reached £850,000, with a further £500,000 on legal costs. Recouping any of this outlay seems unlikely, so central RSPCA funds will bear the brunt, and a campaign has been launched for public donations.

If you require information about caring for any pet please look at the 'advice for pet care' on the national web site www.rspca.org.uk.

The Inspectors often have to relocate feral cats - if you know of a stable or farm where these animals can be transferred please contact Elaine.

www.rspca-oxfordshire.org.uk

In a case where a prosecution is brought, animals cannot be rehomed unless the owner is convicted. This can result in months of waiting, leading to high boarding costs. Worse still, animals can suffer because they need to socialise, some more than others; dogs are a case in point. With Blackberry Farm always bursting at the seams, the staff can find it hard to give every dog the necessary socialising and some animals pine and suffer depression.

The recession has increased the number of animals abandoned or given up by 57 per cent. The saddest cases are horses, where owners can no longer support the high costs involved. The RSPCA's horse centre in Wales is now considering putting down healthy animals, as they and the other sanctuaries are chock-a-block. Where pets are strays or abandoned, attempts will be made to trace the owners and a microchip can be vital. New arrivals are held in quarantine, checked by the vet, treated for worms and fleas, vaccinated, neutered and microchipped.

Most animals are kept at Willow Farm pending rehoming, but some stay with Oxfordshire's coterie of fosterers. Through their own and other websites, they advertise pets for rehoming, plus they receive many enquiries by phone. Would-be adopters are checked with a home visit, then pay a rehoming fee, currently £50 for a cat and £70 for a kitten. In conjunction with other websites, the branch runs a lost and found service, too.

Willow Farm has around ten regular volunteers willing to get their hands dirty, backed up by a number who will socialise with the pets. For animals that have been through some kind of stress or trauma, this is key to rehoming. Stressed animals will be apt to turn unexpectedly, nipping or biting humans and other family pets. Unless normality can be restored, the chances of rehoming are reduced to those with no children or other pets and who are willing to take the risk.

Money is an ever-present need to fund the branch. With its shop in Banbury, the expenses of Willow Farm and welfare vouchers for those on low incomes to pay vets' bills, running costs are £120,000 plus a year. The volunteers attend events, hold microchipping sessions around the county, and go tin-rattling at the Tesco store in Abingdon every April. Nonetheless, the branch is seeking a part-time paid fundraiser to generate the necessary income levels.

Willow Farm is a centre of love, care and dedication. Are you looking for a pet? Would you like to know more, volunteer or give a donation? If so, they would love to hear from you. For more information call 01235 821536 or visit the website: www.rspcaoxfordshire.org.uk

Cisco Giving Back at Willow Farm

In his 'day job' Branch Secretary Brian James works for Cisco's EUEM Commercial Contracts Team (CCT) at Cisco's Reading offices. Cisco has a strong community ethic for its workforce, and all employees are encouraged to donate time towards charity or community projects. Members of the CCT decided to donate a day's work time towards the Oxfordshire Branch and Willow Farm - for which we thank them very much.

We decided a much-needed project was to enhance our six rabbit hutches to make them safe for our rabbits - our bunnies have been most adept at tunnelling over recent months! The Cisco team - Robyne, Zeien, Shaz, Goya, Isa, Krishna, Beatrice, and Brian himself - visited Willow Farm on Thursday 2 July to work on the project.

The task was to move the hutches, lay some welded mesh sheets (purchased and donated by the CCT) and replace the hutch; this is not as easy as it sounds when the RSPCA-design hutches are not intended for easy handling and moving! This work was of course during the week of the heat wave, so the work was hot and tiring (indeed the max temperature on the day of 33.8C may prove to be the hottest day of the year) - thanks are due to Willow Farm Assistant Manager Elaine Hopes for the idea of buckets of cold water and towels to help us keep cool.

The team worked very hard in the hot and humid conditions, and completed the first four hutches during the morning; the remaining two hutches were completed after a much-needed lunchtime rest. Other than a few panels needing refitting, our only unexpected problem proved to be literally unearthing a nest of red-tailed bumblebees when working on the last hutch - thankfully these bumblebees are fairly harmless!



www.rspca-oxfordshire.org.uk

Our rabbits are now secure and safe, although I am not sure Ice, Cream, Alfie and Sooty in particular entirely appreciate yet what we have done for their benefit - Cream was most perplexed when she raced down the ramp to resume one of her many escape tunnels.

The team were of course also able to socialize with some of our rescue animals - all of whom made a great impression... Everyone went home tired and sore, but all enjoyed their day with us.

The RSPCA Oxfordshire Branch and Willow Farm express our sincere thanks to Cisco and their CCT for their generous time and dedication to help our animal care provision.



FUNDRAISE FOR THE RSPCA!!
Like pub quizzes? Coffee mornings? Tombolas? If you have a good idea and enjoy fundraising for a good cause then the RSPCA need you! For more information on how you can help us please telephone Elaine on 01235 816441 or 07791 292635.

Is your school having a charity fundraising day?
- Please think of helping your local RSPCA (please contact Elaine on 07791 292635 for balloons, posters, banners, etc. to help advertise the charity)

If you would like to take part in a charity or sponsored event, such as a fun run, sponsored silence, pub quiz, coffee morning, or tombola please contact Judith for more information or to obtain a sponsor form for your local RSPCA.

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: We are now open at 36 Church Lane, :
: Banbury! :
: Open 9:30-4:30pm Mon-Sat :
: :
: We are looking for volunteers, particularly :
: on Saturdays and good quality donations - :
: clothes, bric-a-brac. :
: :
: Please drop in or contact Kim or Sasha on :
: 01295 265632 :
: :
:

Does your company offer matched funding for raising money for a local charity? - Please remember local animals that need our help.

Get a £10 Microchipping Gift Voucher!!!
Please contact Katherine for more details

Blackberry Farm, the RSPCA National rehoming centre near Bicester always has lots of animals looking for new homes Tel 0870 0101 852

There are also lots of other animals available - gerbils, rats chincillas, and even lots of lovely birds.

Please also look at www.rspca-oxfordshire.org.uk for more animals and further details.

www.rspca-oxfordshire.org.uk

Animal Cruelty Helpline Number
0300 1234 999
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