

Focus on Volunteering

Working in an Animal Sanctuary

Wanting to dispose of some old blankets, widower Anthony Devanney 'phoned the nearby PAWS Animal Sanctuary and having first spoken to the owner, he arranged to deliver them. Being a practical man, and having run out of DIY projects at home, Anthony also offered his services as a handyman and in no time at all, found himself looking after two delightful miniature horses and a donkey as well as doing odd jobs around the sanctuary.



Anthony with friend Ching looking after Toyhorse Princess Snowdrop

Every morning by choice just around 6.30 am, Anthony arrives at the sanctuary to greet his charges with pieces of carrot or apple and to 'have a chat'. Anthony has discovered that horses and donkeys are very good listeners and in total confidence he can share with them his innermost thoughts and feelings. "Sometimes," he says, "they even seem to nod, shake their heads, nuzzle me or whinny in understanding," Through them he's also managed to overcome a life-long fear of horses.

Morning greetings over, Anthony gets down to the business of providing fresh hay, clearing the paddock of manure and bagging it for free disposal to local gardeners, cleaning and re-filling the trough with fresh water, mucking out the stalls and collecting bales of hay to be stored in the loft.

Stacey, herself a widow and owner of the sanctuary says that most people who come to her as volunteers are suffering from depression because of widowhood, unemployment or other life trauma and that she sees great changes in them as they begin to focus on the needs of even less fortunate creatures and find a new purpose in life.

Once through the gate of the sanctuary one is greeted by a cheeky talking parrot and a bevy of little dogs. Koi carp swim in a pond, running water providing a soothing background ambience for volunteers and residents alike. Purpose built 'runs' house guinea pigs, tortoise, Silky chickens, ducks and pups and cats and the telephone rings continuously as refuge is sought for yet more stray and neglected animals.

Overall there is a great feeling of relaxation and love at the sanctuary and if not caring for the animals there are always jobs to do raising plants in the greenhouse, carrying out repairs, minding the shop and generally helping with fund raising. In fact something for just about everybody.



Anthony has found volunteering so rewarding that he's now also working in a

charity shop and training to become a Samaritan.



A short film of Anthony's voluntary work at the animal sanctuary will be available to view on the website later this year.

www.pawsanimalsanctuaryfindon.co.uk