


EASE NEWS



ENVIRONMENTAL ANIMAL SANCTUARY AND EDUCATION
THE NEWSLETTER FOR THE **FRIENDS OF EASE**

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Editorial

***H**appy New Year to our EASE Friends, and we wish you all an enjoyable and healthy 2017.*

This first issue of 2017 contains updates about our new website, as well as a book review from EASE Friend Deirdre Chitwood, and other animal-related stories and news items.




I hope you enjoy reading the newsletter, and thank you to you all for your continued support.

*MELINDA HILL
EASE PROJECT MANAGER*








New EASE website

We are pleased to announce the launch of the new EASE website, following an overhaul of its layout and presentation. The website had largely remained unchanged since its launch some 16 or so years ago, although new content has been added regularly since its inception, so it was high time for a new and more modern look.

The new website retains the wealth of material available for free download, but now clearly shows the main areas that EASE focuses on, being:

-  The Human/Animal Relationship
-  Pet Loss Support
-  Education

The majority of the free downloads – support sheets, podcasts and other material – are now located on these three pages, although other downloads are also available on the pages on the side menu, being:

-  [Blog](#)
-  [Book Reviews](#)
-  [Articles](#)
-  [Newsletters](#)
-  [The Team](#)
-  [Contact Us](#)
-  [Donations](#)

As you can see, we have also added a Blog page which Angela and I will regularly contribute to, so do check from time to time if you're interested in reading these.

We have some plans for new additions to the website, and will let you know more about these in future newsletters.

Alongside the new website we are also now using MailChimp to distribute the six-monthly newsletters. Hopefully this first newsletter of 2017 will arrive safely with everyone – apologies if there are any hitches as we get used to this new system! MailChimp makes it very easy to unsubscribe or change your details if you need to, and overall will hopefully be far easier for us all to use.

So please take a look at the new website, and feel free to pass on any comments or reflections you may have – just email me at mel@ease-animals.org.uk.



It should not be believed that all beings exist for the sake of the existence of man. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes and not for the sake of something else.

Maimonides, *The Guide for the Perplexed*
1:72.c. 1190

Book Review

The James and Bob Books: 'A Street Cat Named Bob' and 'The World According to Bob' by James Bowen

Review by Deirdre Chitwood

Quickly scanning the bookshelves of a book shop in Heathrow Airport as I was getting ready to board a plane to the USA a few years ago, the picture of a ginger cat with a scarf tied round its neck caught my eye. Not surprising really, as I am an animal lover and have five cats of my own, but also incredibly I recognized the cat as one I had seen some months earlier accompanying a busker in Covent Garden Underground Station. The book, 'A Street Cat Named Bob', at that time was already an international best seller and had sold over a million copies in the UK alone.

Rejecting all the movies on offer during the flight, I consumed the book cover to cover, being totally captivated by the simplicity of the language and the message of love and hope that emerged from its pages. The true story of how a little ginger tom cat helped the author, James Bowen, turn his life around from being a recovering heroin addict to finding a meaning in life is uplifting and inspirational. It illustrates how strong the human animal bond can be and demonstrates with feeling the healing affect animals can have on our lives.

This book and the sequel, 'The World According to Bob', which I have just finished reading traces the story from when James first finds Bob in the hallway of his building through their remarkable life together as Bob helps James to totally recover from his addiction, to becoming the main attraction in his

busking routine, to the events which lead up to James writing their story and securing a book deal with the publishers "Hodder and Stoughton".

James was born in Surrey in 1979 and following his parent's divorce, moved to Australia with his mother. He was often bullied at school and dropped out of education early. He became a self-confessed 'tearaway kid' and was later mistakenly diagnosed with ADHD, schizophrenia and manic depression. On returning to the UK in 1997 James became homeless and began sleeping on the streets, and over the next ten years fell into becoming a heroin addict.

In the spring of 2007 James made the decision that he had to get his life back and enrolled in a methadone program, and began busking in Convent Garden and living in supported housing. One evening he returned home to find a ginger cat and, assuming he belonged to another resident, returned to his flat. However, the cat was still there the next day and the following day. James became concerned and discovered he had an infected wound on his back leg. With only a few pounds to his name, James took the cat to the nearby RSPCA clinic who gave him a two-week course of antibiotics. It cost him all the money he had but he felt good about what he had done and knew that he would have to take the cat in to administer the medication whilst continuing to look for his owner. Once the cat was better he released him back onto the streets hoping he would find his own way home but instead he began following him around, even onto the bus when he left to go busking. James kept asking the cat, "do you want to go or stay with me, it's your choice?" The answer was clear and Bob – as James named him after the character from the television drama *Twin Peaks* – decided he definitely wanted to be with James.



Bob is no ordinary cat, he is very intelligent and does not seem to be worried or concerned by very much, and just wants to be with James. He says, “He loves me and I love him, and together we have created a very special bond.” Bob began to go with James to his regular haunts in Covent Garden and Piccadilly, travelling in the window seat of the number 73 bus and even following him onto trains in the underground during rush hour. James bought him a harness and leash for safety but mostly Bob liked to sit on James’s shoulders, draped around his neck. He would even do this when James bought a bicycle and would cycle to his pitches in central London, much to the amazement of their fellow travellers. Whilst busking Bob was quite happy to sit down on a rug that James would take for him. He didn’t seem to mind the crowds of people and the attraction he would cause, in fact he seemed to quite relish it. James taught Bob a few tricks which he enjoyed to do and even appeared ‘to work the crowd’ when James needed some extra money to make it through the week.



James then became fit enough to take on his first job selling the Big Issue magazine which helps homeless people get back on their feet. Bob became a big plus on the streets attracting regular customers who would often have a kind word for Bob and sometimes even offer James a little extra money to help him feed his furry friend. For the first time in his life James began to see a nicer, softer and more generous side of people which amazed him. Bob was helping him to heal in all kind of ways. He became the reason “I wake up for every day... he’s definitely given me the right direction to live my life.”

Bob was always given the choice whether to go ‘work’ with James especially if the weather was really bad but mostly Bob would decide to go. On one cold morning James put a scarf round Bob’s neck and

thereafter it became Bob’s trademark. Amazingly, women began giving Bob scarves and even making them for him. People began giving him treats and bringing food. Gradually the public began uploading videos of the two of them on YouTube and tourists would visit Covent Garden specifically to see them.

Of course, not all of it was good, and there were inevitably some really rough times. Some people were not so nice and one woman was convinced that James was exploiting Bob and reported him for animal cruelty to the police. Occasionally someone would be a little too rough with Bob and he would lash out, which didn’t go down too well. At one point another Big Issue seller became jealous of James and ended up getting him terminated just so that he could take over his pitch.

When James concluded his methadone treatment he inevitably suffered withdrawal symptoms which were incredibly unpleasant and difficult. During this time James said he would shout at Bob to go away and leave him alone. Bob seemed to know what James was going through and would then just wait quietly at his side. James also got very ill with a blood clot after going back to see his mother in Australia and went through a very difficult time when he could hardly walk because the pain in his legs was so severe. But somehow having Bob by his side, giving him huge amounts of loyalty, love and compassion, gave him the strength and fortitude to keep going. During all this time Bob was giving him something other than himself to look after. James was learning for the first time how to be responsible for another life, and he had to keep going because he couldn’t let Bob down. “He has simply become my best friend, and has looked after me, just as much as I have him.”

In time, James and Bob attracted the attention of the Islington Tribune, which published a story of them in 2010. This was read by a literary agent who introduced James to the writer, Garry Jenkins. Together they produced an outline for a book and secured a deal with the publishers. ‘A Street Cat Named Bob’ has now been translated into 30 languages and spent over 76 weeks at the top of the Sunday Times bestseller list. The book ‘The World According to Bob’ was released in 2013 and was also a number one book on The Sunday Times bestseller list. Since that time a number of children’s books about

Bob have also been released. It seems people of all ages cannot get enough of the story of Bob.

As often happens with very special and intense, life changing experiences, the result not only changed James's life with Bob but has inspired James to dedicate his life to help numerous animal charities and charities that involve homelessness, literacy and animal welfare. James says he enjoys the feeling of being able 'to give back' for the first time in his life. It has also given him a chance to make people aware of the realities of living on the streets and also the plight of millions of stray animals. One such enterprise is Bob's World Cat Café Fundraiser. The aim is to raise money to open a café in London that will provide homes for homeless and abused or unwanted cats, and a safe haven for like-minded people to have refreshments whilst being surrounded by cats. So far the fundraiser has raised over 160,000 pounds. See www.igg.me/at/jamesandbobcafe.

James and Bob's story is now followed by millions on social media and they been on a number of TV shows. Amazingly, Bob is always completely calm and unperturbed by the lights and cameras. Now he is even a film star, Bob playing Bob in a film about their story. It seems this autobiography of one down-and-out and his kismet of meeting a stray tom cat continues to touch people's hearts.



Currently in the UK, pets suffering from smoke inhalation are treated with a human oxygen mask – which makes it difficult for firefighters to treat them. Pets at Home are teaming up with SmokeyPaws.co.uk to provide pet-specific breathing apparatus to 75 fire stations across the UK, which may save hundreds of pets.



Help us to ensure the UK Fire Service
carry Pet Oxygen Masks!

The Story of Hamish McHamish

The St Andrew's town cat Hamish McHamish has passed away. The ginger cat was 15 years old and died after battling a chest infection. Hamish's Facebook page broke the news, posting that he passed: "Peacefully, and with his Mum Marianne by his side".

"In the end, the chest infection that he had been battling proved too much for him and the kindest thing to do was to let him go", the administrator posted. "Thank you Hamish for the years of joy you've given us and for letting us all be part of your life. May your remarkable spirit live on forever in the town you loved... and ruled! Here's to you, old chum."

Despite belonging to Marianne Baird, Mr McHamish adopted a nomadic life. He was indeed a remarkable cat who stalked the auld grey toon of St Andrews with majesty and pride. He had many homes, from student flats to shop windows. His ginger fur could be witnessed on coats across the town with many visitors, students and residents stopping to give the tom cat a cuddle.



Hamish McHamish, St Andrews' town cat, going for a stroll

Mr McHamish was so well-loved by the town that in the end Mrs Baird was forced to get replacement pets to keep her company – Mr McHamish was just never home. In true St Andrews style, he was out networking across the town. He had his own 'Hamish recommends' section in Waterstones, which was stocked with everything from fish cookbooks to cat-based tales, and often slept in the sun in the South Street estate

agents. This year also saw the publication of his fantastic ‘biography’ “Hamish McHamish, Cool Cat About Town” by Susan McMullan.

Although this news will be heart-breaking for the thousands of St Andrews students who often had a cuddle with Hamish in times of exam stress or whilst feeling homesick, he will not be forgotten.

The residents of St Andrews raised £5,000 for a bronze statue of Hamish to be erected earlier this year. The statue unveiled by Provost of Fife, Jim Leishman, stands in the town's Church Square and has been compared to Edinburgh's Greyfriars Bobby dog.



“Dogs are our link to paradise. They don't know evil or jealousy or discontent. To sit with a dog on a hillside on a glorious afternoon is to be back in Eden, where doing nothing was not boring – it was peace.”

Milan Kundera



The Kindness Of Strangers

Taken from the new Blog page on the EASE website

I often take my Golden Retriever, Pasha, into work with me and then take him for a walk at lunchtime. However, I have to try to avoid places with water as there's nothing more that Pasha likes than to take a dip, and then I have to come back to the office with a very wet and rather smelly dog, which isn't always met with enthusiasm. But on this occasion many of the powers that be in the office were away so I thought I'd treat Pasha with a lunchtime swim.

Arriving at Hartham Common, the local walking park flanked on all sides by rivers, Pasha spent a happy half hour running, swimming, rolling and playing. Then he spotted a herd of beautiful black cows, young and old, on the other side of the river. He gave a bark or two, to which he got little response, so he promptly got into the river and, to my consternation, swam across to the other side to say hello.

Getting out of the river, he approached the nearest cows to greet them, and they gently looked at him and he at them. So far so good. Then he went to say hello to the youngsters, at which point the mother cows decided to wander over to investigate. As the herd of large cows got closer to Pasha, he backed into the trees at the river's edge, only to find himself stuck a few foot high on a trunk overhanging the river – with no way back or out...

Turning round to face me, a frightened Pasha started to bark, while the cows just stood their ground and looked on, as if amused. I called him; I waved treats at him; I threatened him; I promised him all manner of good things; I pretended to walk away – all to no avail. There was simply no way Pasha could or would jump from his perch into the water and swim back to safety. What was I to do?

I got out my mobile and checked Google maps but the nearest river crossing was far away and getting there would mean leaving Pasha stranded while I drove to find the field with the cows. So that was not an option. As I looked at the river, I was left with a growing dread that there really was only one solution – to swim across the river to reach him. But I was at wearing my office clothes and would have to return to work after this lunch break, with no change of clothes. So what was I to do? The only way would be to swim naked and dry myself with my cardigan –

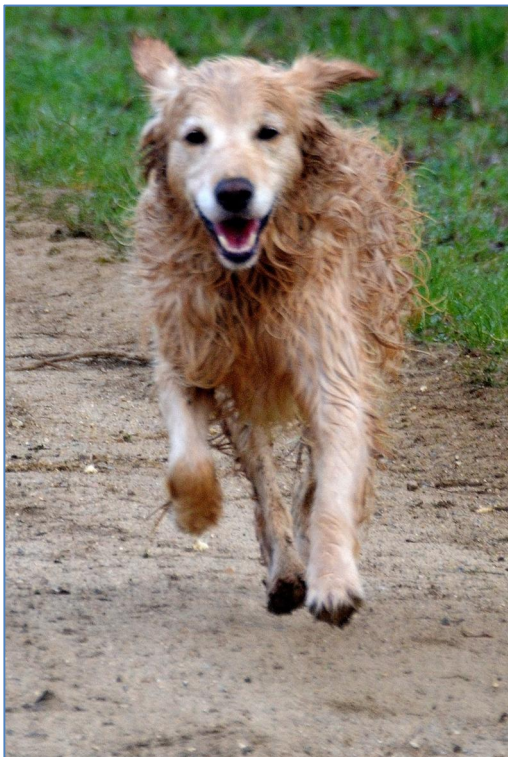
but the idea of streaking in Hertford was not at all appealing.

As I pondered my dilemma, getting more anxious by the minute, a middle-aged woman approached, with two border collie dogs. She stopped and asked what was happening, and I told her of my dilemma. She looked at me, looked at Pasha, smiled, and said “I’ll do it, I’ll swim across to get him”! I stared at her in disbelief as she took off her clothes down to her bra and knickers, handed me the lead of one dog and the ball for the other, and set off down the muddy bank with Pasha’s lead over her shoulders.

She swam across the river, wincing at the cold water, approached Pasha and attached the lead to his collar. She then encouraged him down from the trunk and back into the water, at which point he promptly swam straight across the river, got out the other side, shook himself and ran off to play with the other dogs – without a word of thanks!

The lady swam back and climbed up the bank, where I tried rather ineffectually to dry her with my cardigan, thanking her all the time. “Not a problem at all”, she said. “Last month I got in to help a sheep who’d been chased into the river by a dog!” She then put on her clothes and we walked back together to my car with our dogs playing at our heels.

What a kind lady, to help out a dog and woman in distress without a moment’s hesitation... thank you!



EASE Friend, Freni Chinoy, read this blog post and another entitled ‘Saving Grace’ by Angela Garner, and was moved to write this poem in response:

Saving of the precious lives

This is saving,
Saving of precious living creatures
By those who have kindness within
them.

Saving, saving, saving.
What precious creatures still need
saving
From cruelty and unkindnesses?

Love of all things,
Kindness to all things,
Abounds
In this wonderful
Great Mother
Which cares and looks after us.

All life is precious
And definitely worth saving.



“Near this spot are deposited the remains of one who possessed Beauty without Vanity, Strength without Insolence, Courage without Ferocity, and all the Virtues of Man without his Vices. This praise, which would be unmeaning Flattery, if inscribed over human ashes, is but a just Tribute to the Memory of Botswain, a Dog.”

John Cam Hobhouse

Tiny Stray Dog Finds Her Human When She Joins Him For 77 Miles In Race

Thanks to a successful crowd-funding campaign, Dion Leonard, an extreme marathon runner, is adopting a stray pup he met while running a 155-mile race in the Gobi desert in China. The funds that were raised will help cover medical and quarantine expenses so that the dog can be transported from China to Leonard's home of Edinburgh, Scotland.



The female dog, whom Leonard appropriately named Gobi, joined Leonard on day two of the annual 4 Deserts Race Series and ran side-by-side with him for 77 miles, according to The Independent. Leonard told the outlet that he had noticed Gobi running with 101 runners during the first day, but on the second day, Gobi was on the start line, looking up at him. "This was the first contact I had with her and as I ran off the line I noticed her by my side," he told the Independent. "I didn't speak much to her that day thinking she wouldn't stay with me, but at the finish line she followed me into the tent and we slept next to each other. That was it then."

Leonard shared his sleeping space, water and food with his small companion during the race. He even lent her a hand when needed. "I carried her across rivers and over sluice gates she could not cross on her own," he wrote on his Crowdfunder page. After the race, it was clear to Leonard that he had developed a special bond with the pooch and started researching ways to get Gobi to the UK. He learned that it would take four months for Gobi to be medically checked, quarantined and cleared for entry. All of which will cost \$6,560, an amount that has been surpassed due to a successful Crowdfunder campaign that raised \$13,330.

Leonard told the BBC, that Gobi is currently in the care of a friend in China and hopes she will arrive in Scotland by Christmas. "That would be amazing", he told BBC. "That would be the best Christmas present ever."



Colleges turn to Pets for Stress Relief

Universities are increasingly looking to animals to relax students during exams.

For the second year, Nottingham Trent University set a room aside for students to cuddle a pet for relaxation. This year it was micropigs, while last year students snuggled puppies – raising £5000 for Guide Dogs in the process. Earlier this year, Exeter University launched a micropig room while puppies featured at Bristol and Leicester universities.

The recognition of the health benefits of animals to humans from a broader audience is encouraging, but such programmes need to carefully monitor both the people's and the pets' welfare. Spokesperson Julia Dando of SCAS (Society for Companion Animal Studies) explained, "Animal and human welfare is paramount. SCAS is keen to support colleges to develop animal-assisted stress-reduction programmes that are both effective and safe. SCAS will be publishing a number of resources to provide guidance and support to institutions considering this type of activity."



EASE
15 Rectory Close
Essendon, Hatfield
Herts AL9 6HG

www.ease-animals.org.uk
email: mel@ease-animals.org.uk